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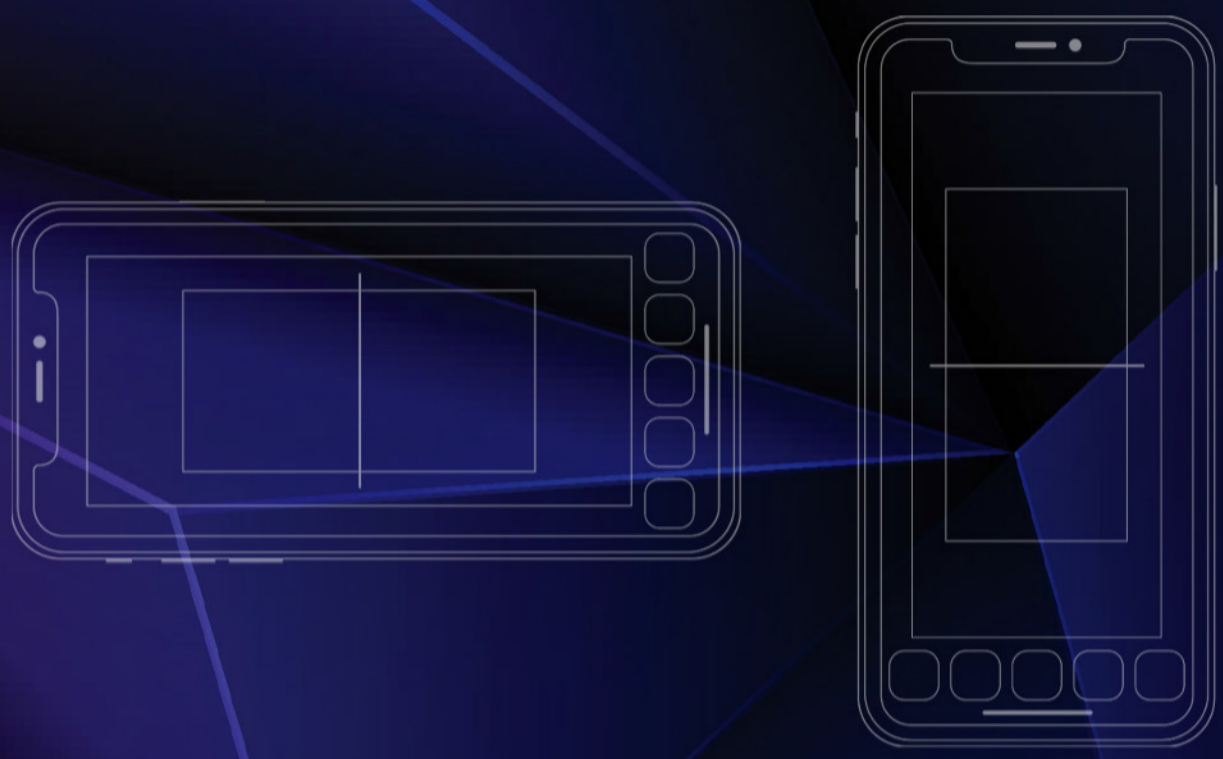

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DOORDASH HITS RECORD FOR ORDERS, REVENUE IN SECOND QUARTER

DOORDASH

DoorDash set records for total orders and revenue in the second quarter as its grocery and convenience deliveries accelerated and it improved driver efficiency.

The San Francisco-based delivery company said this week that its total orders rose 25% to 532 million for the April-June period. That was ahead of Wall Street's forecast of 521 million, according to analysts polled by FactSet.

Revenue rose 33% to $2.1 billion, which was in line with analysts' forecasts.

DoorDash raised its full-year forecast Wednesday. The company said it now expects gross order values between $64.2 billion and $65.2 billion for the year, up from the $63 billion to $64.5 billion previously forecast. DoorDash expects adjusted pretax earnings between $750 million and $1.05 billion, up from a range of $600 million to $900 million.

DoorDash's shares rose 5% in after-hours trading.

DoorDash Chief Financial Officer Ravi Inukonda said the company is continuing to see growth in users and those customers are ordering more frequently. The 10-year-old company still delivers primarily from restaurants, but added grocery delivery in 2020 and convenience store delivery in 2021. Deliveries from sporting goods stores, pet stores and florists are also driving growth. The company delivered more than 200,000 flower orders during Mother's Day week.

"We have become more of a utility and habit," Inukonda said. "This is a small treat that still delights people. That's what's driving growth in the business."

DashPass subscribers __ who get most deliveries free for a $9.99 monthly fee __ rose to a new high during the quarter, Inukonda said. The company won't reveal how many DashPass subscribers it currently has, but said it had 15 million at the end of last year.

Inukonda said innovation __ including making it easier for customers to search for products on the DoorDash app __ is another reason the company continues to gain market share in all the markets in which it operates. And the company said improved logistics are helping driver efficiency.

The company spent less than it expected on acquiring and retaining delivery drivers. Inukonda said college students are helping boost the company's driver ranks in the summer. And a newly launched system that lets drivers choose whether to make an hourly rate or be paid by delivery could also help retain drivers.

Still, DoorDash __ which has never earned an annual profit __ continues to invest heavily in other areas. Research and development costs were up 30% for the quarter, while marketing costs rose 12%. DoorDash offered summer deals to its DashPass customers and worked to gain share overseas.

DOORDASH

DoorDash narrowed its net loss to $172 million in the second quarter, from a loss of $263 million in the same period a year ago. The company lost 44 cents per share, which was higher than the 41 cent per-share loss Wall Street forecast, according to FactSet.

Inukonda said that higher-than-expected loss was due to the cost of absorbing employees from Wolt Enterprises, the Finnish delivery service DoorDash acquired in the second quarter of 2022. The results reported didn't include Wolt's contribution.

In a letter to investors, DoorDash Co-Founder and CEO Tony Xu said the company may continue to post losses as it invests in new delivery partnerships, international markets and advertising. But he said he remains confident in the company's long-term plans.

"I think the world only tends to want to go faster. Customer expectations tend to only go in one direction when it comes to something like delivery, whether that's with food or other types of items," he said. "There's a lot of work and the roadmap ahead is quite lengthy."

DOORDASH

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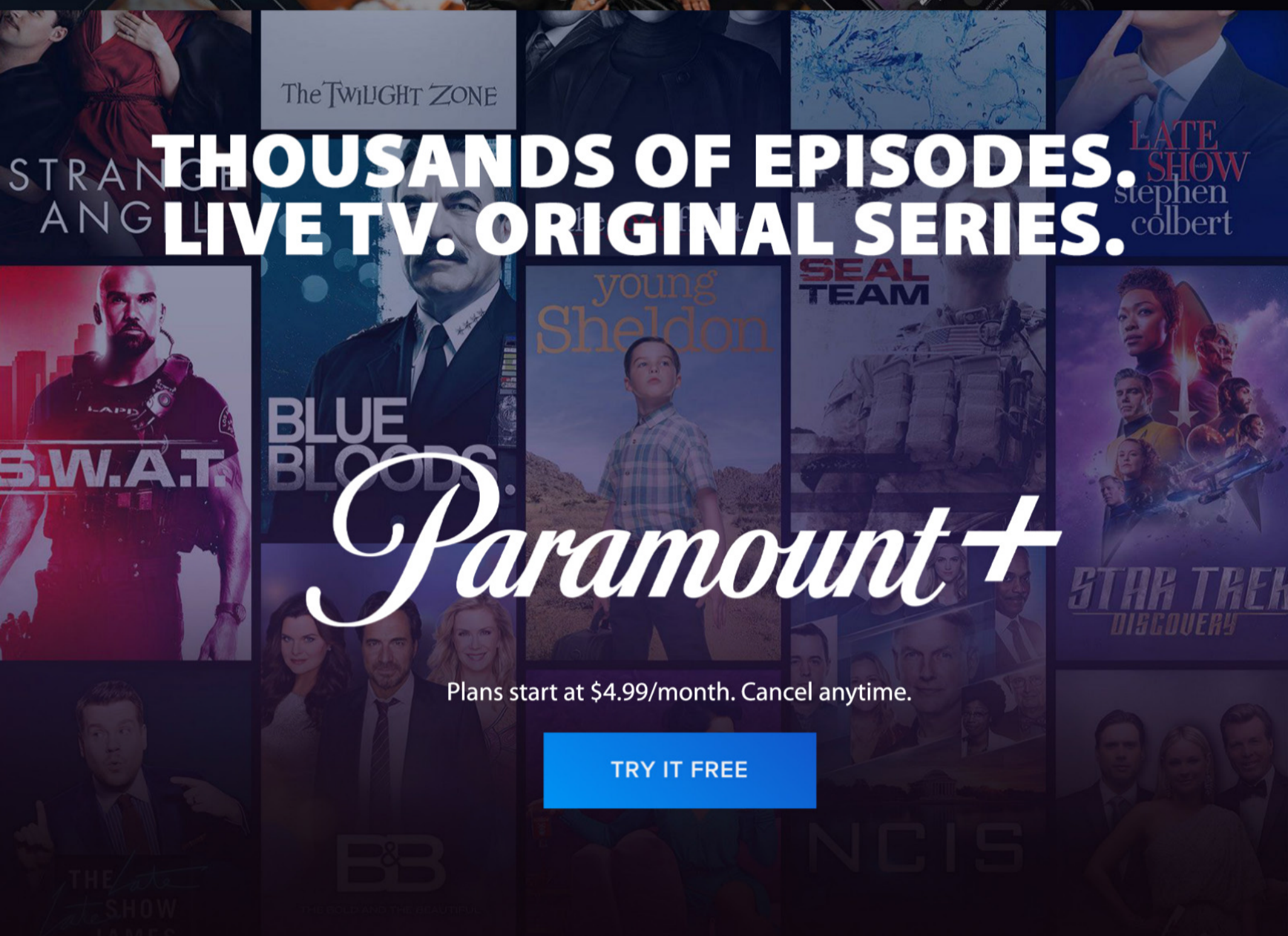

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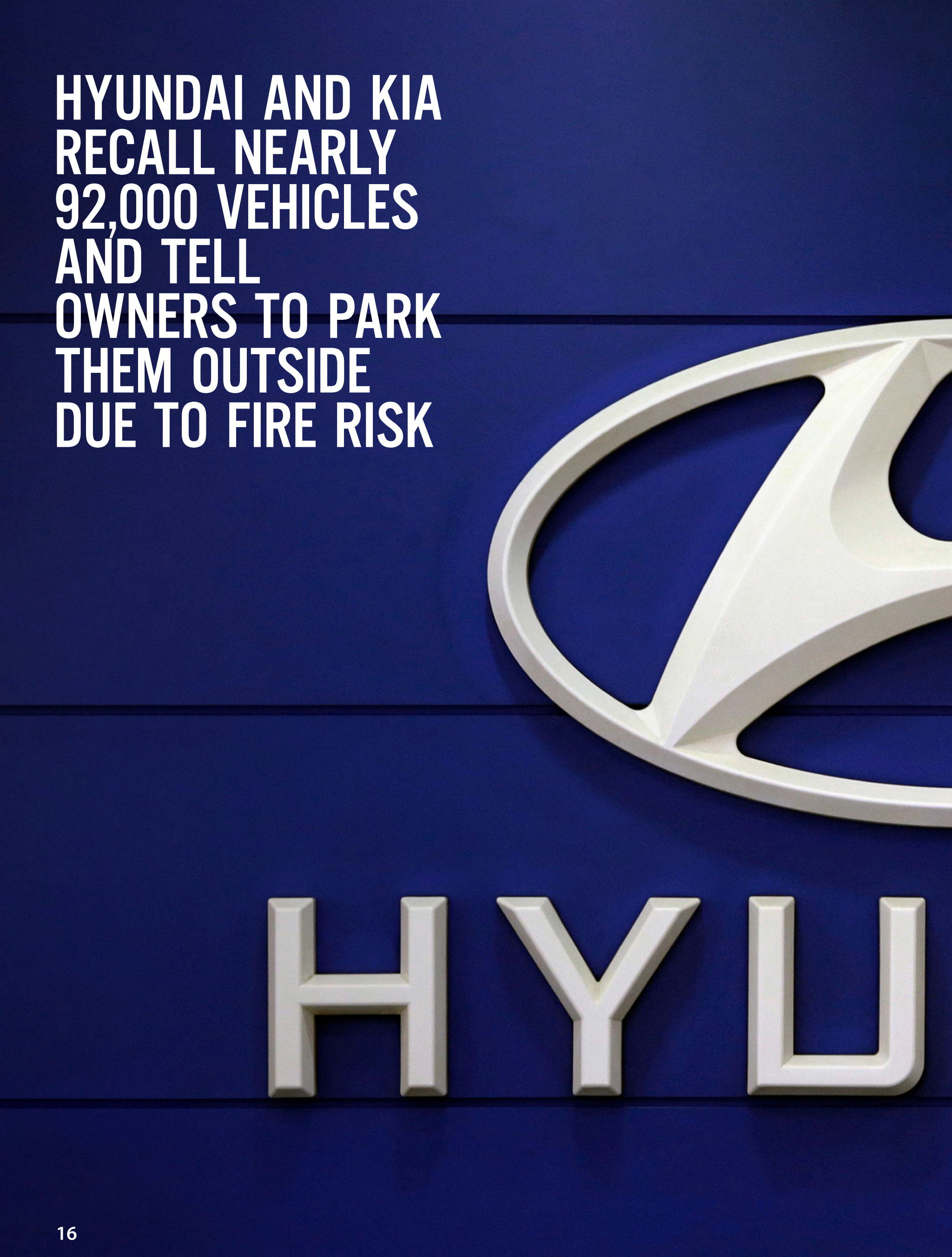

HYUNDAI

Hyundai and Kia are telling the owners of nearly 92,000 vehicles in the U.S. to park them outside because an electronic controller in an oil pump can overheat and cause fires.

The affiliated Korean automakers are recalling the vehicles and also are telling owners to park them away from structures until repairs are made.

The recalls cover certain 2023 and 2024 Hyundai Palisades, as well some 2023 Tucson, Sonata, Elantra and Kona vehicles. Affected Kias include the 2023 Soul and Sportage as well as some 2023 and 2024 Seltos vehicles.

The companies say in documents posted Thursday by U.S. safety regulators that a capacitor on a circuit board in the oil pump

Image: David Zalubowski

assembly for the transmission may have been damaged by the supplier during manufacturing. That can cause a short-circuit and increase the risk of a fire.

Kia says it has six reports of melting components but no fires or injuries. Hyundai says it has confirmed four "thermal incidents" and no injuries.

Dealers will inspect and replace the oil pump controller if necessary. Hyundai owners will be notified by letter on Sept. 25. Kia will notify owners starting Sept. 28.

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CFPB SUES AUTO DEALER FOR ILLEGALLY LOCKING CARS, RE-POSSESSING VEHICLES, OTHER SHADY ACTIVITIES

BUREAU OF CONSUMER FINANCIAL
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The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau on Wednesday sued USASF Servicing, the financial arm of a chain of auto dealerships found mostly in the South, alleging the company committed a laundry list of illegal practices, like disabling borrowers' cars, double-billing customers, and illegally repossessing cars.

The bureau is seeking to get millions of dollars in refunds for thousands of USASF customers, as well as impose fines and penalties against the Georgia-based company.

USASF is affiliated with U.S. Auto Sales, a dealership chain that sold used cars mostly to customers with low incomes or bad credit that operated a "buy here, pay here" business model at its 31 dealerships. U.S. Auto Sales mostly shut down its dealership operations in April, but USASF is still operating as the loan servicer for the company.

The CFPB said that, since 2016, USASF illegally disabled borrowers' cars using what are known as "kill switches," which remotely disable a vehicle when a borrower does not keep up with payments. It's a common but controversial practice, as it cuts the financially struggling borrower off from likely their primary mode of transportation to work.

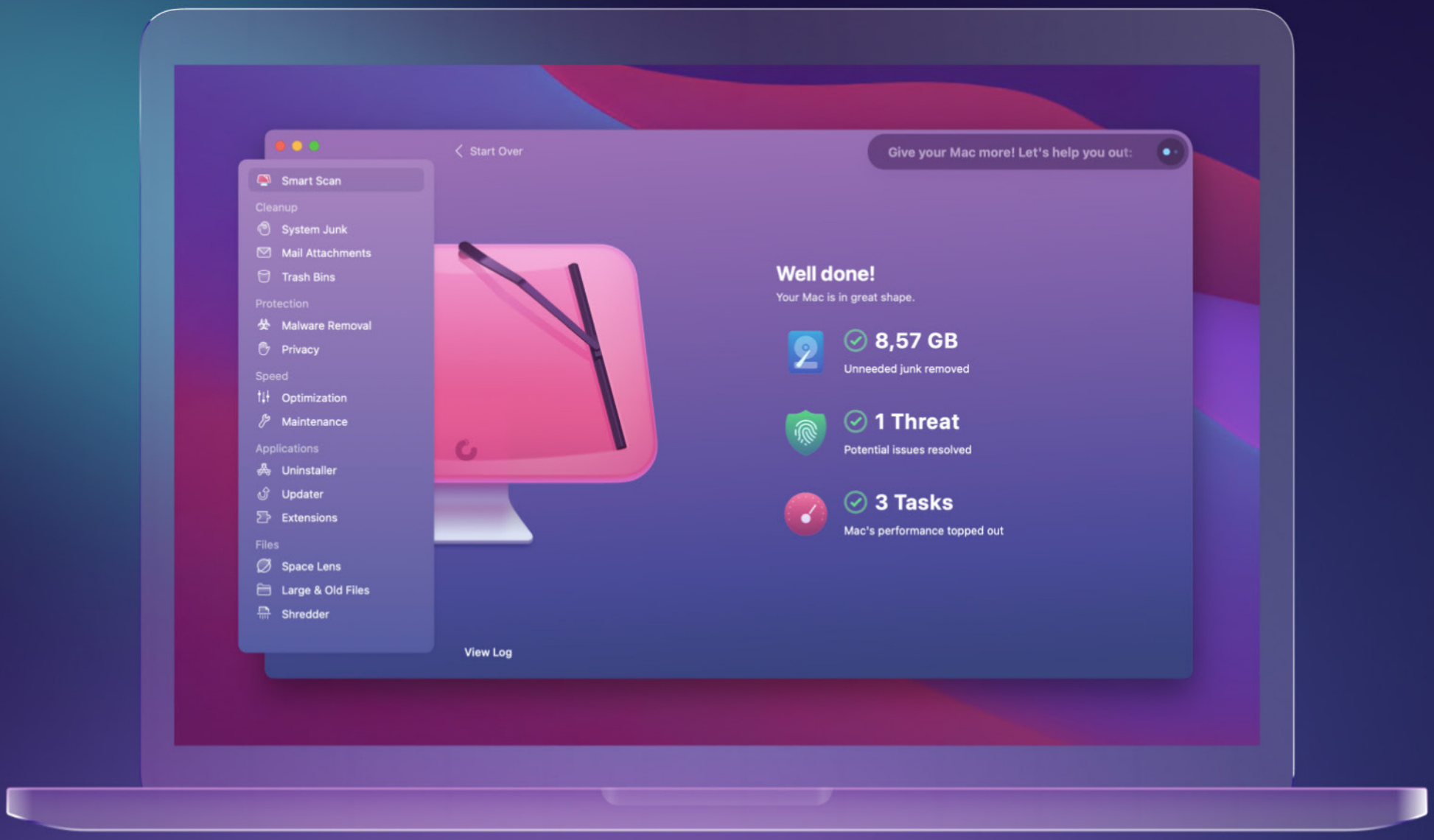
USASF incorrectly disabled vehicles roughly 7,500 times when a customer was not in default, and disabled at least another 1,500 vehicles when the company told the customer it would not do so. The company admitted to the bureau that it erroneously transmitted "warning tones" — audio signals sent to the vehicle warning their cars might be shut off — more than 71,000 times. These tones would often cause stress or anxiety

to customers, making them call USASF, when they may not have been in default.

The company also allegedly double charged roughly 34,000 customers for insurance, and misapplied loan payments toward insurance premiums and late fees instead of principal and interest against thousands of other customers. The bureau alleges customers paid more than $1 million in interest and fees if USASF had correctly serviced the loans.

“Given the rising cost of cars during the pandemic and jump in auto loan debt across the country, the CFPB is working to root out illegal activity in this market,” CFPB Director Rohit Chopra said in a statement.

U.S. Auto Sales is owned by the Pennsylvania private equity firm Milestone Partners. Three Milestone executives did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the bureau’s lawsuit.



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CHINA PROPOSES TO LIMIT CHILDREN'S SMARTPHONE TIME TO A MAXIMUM OF 2 HOURS A DAY

China's internet watchdog has laid out regulations to curb the amount of time children spend on their smartphones, in the latest blow to firms such as Tencent and ByteDance, which run social media platforms and online games.

The Cyberspace Administration of China on Wednesday published the draft guidelines on its site, stating that minors would not be allowed to use most internet services on mobile devices from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m., and that children between the ages of 16 and 18 would only be able to use the internet for two hours a day.

Children between the ages of 8 and 15 would be allowed only an hour a day, while those under 8 would only be allowed 40 minutes.

Only certain services, such as apps or platforms that are deemed suitable to the physical and mental development of minors, will be exempted. The CAC did not specify which internet services would be allowed exemptions.

The restrictions are Beijing's latest efforts to attempt to limit internet addiction, a problem it views as widespread among its youth. In 2019, Beijing limited children's daily online game time to 90 minutes a day and tightened those restrictions in 2021, allowing children only an hour a day of online game play on Fridays, weekends and public holidays.

Short-video and online video platforms like Douyin, Bilibili and Kuaishou have offered youth modes that restrict the type of content shown to minors and the length of time they can use the service. Children are also pushed educational content, such as science experiments.

The latest restrictions would impact firms like Tencent, China's largest online game company, and ByteDance, which runs popular short-video platform Douyin. Firms in China are often responsible for enforcing regulations.

"To effectively strengthen the online protection of minors, the CAC has in recent years pushed for the establishment of a youth mode on internet platforms, expanding its coverage, optimizing its functions and enriching it with age-appropriate content," the CAC said.

"Since the mode was launched, there has been a positive impact in reducing youth internet addiction and the impact of undesirable information," it added.

The CAC said draft guidelines were open to public feedback until Sep. 2. It did not say when the new rules would be into effect.

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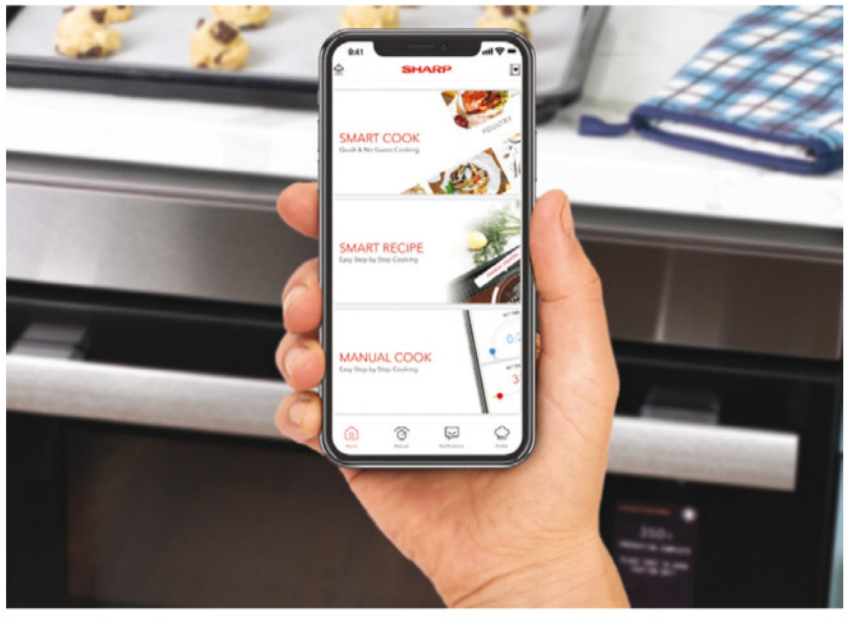

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HEALTH

AMAZON ADDS VIDEO TELEMEDICINE VISITS NATIONWIDE TO ITS VIRTUAL CLINIC

Amazon is adding video telemedicine visits in all 50 states to a virtual clinic it launched last fall, as the e-commerce giant pushes deeper into care delivery.

Amazon said this week that customers can visit its virtual clinic around the clock through Amazon's website or app. There, they can compare prices and response times before picking a telemedicine provider from several options.

The clinic, which doesn't accept insurance, launched last fall with a focus on text message-based consultations. Those remain available in 34 states. The new video telemedicine option also will be available in Washington, D.C.

Virtual care, or telemedicine, exploded in popularity when COVID-19 hit a few years ago. It has remained popular as a convenient way to check in with a doctor or deal with relatively minor health issues like pink eye.

Amazon says its clinic offers care for more than 30 common health conditions. Those include sinus infections, acne, COVID-19 and acid reflux. The clinic also offers treatments for motion sickness, seasonal allergies and several sexual health conditions, including erectile dysfunction.

It also provides birth control and emergency contraception.

Chief Medical Officer Dr. Nworah Ayogu said in a blog post that the clinic aims to remove barriers to help people treat "everyday health concerns."

"As a doctor, I've seen firsthand that patients want to be healthy but lack the time, tools, or resources to effectively manage their care," Ayogu wrote.

Amazon said messaging-based consultations cost $35 on average while video visits cost $75.

amazon

amazon clinic

How it works

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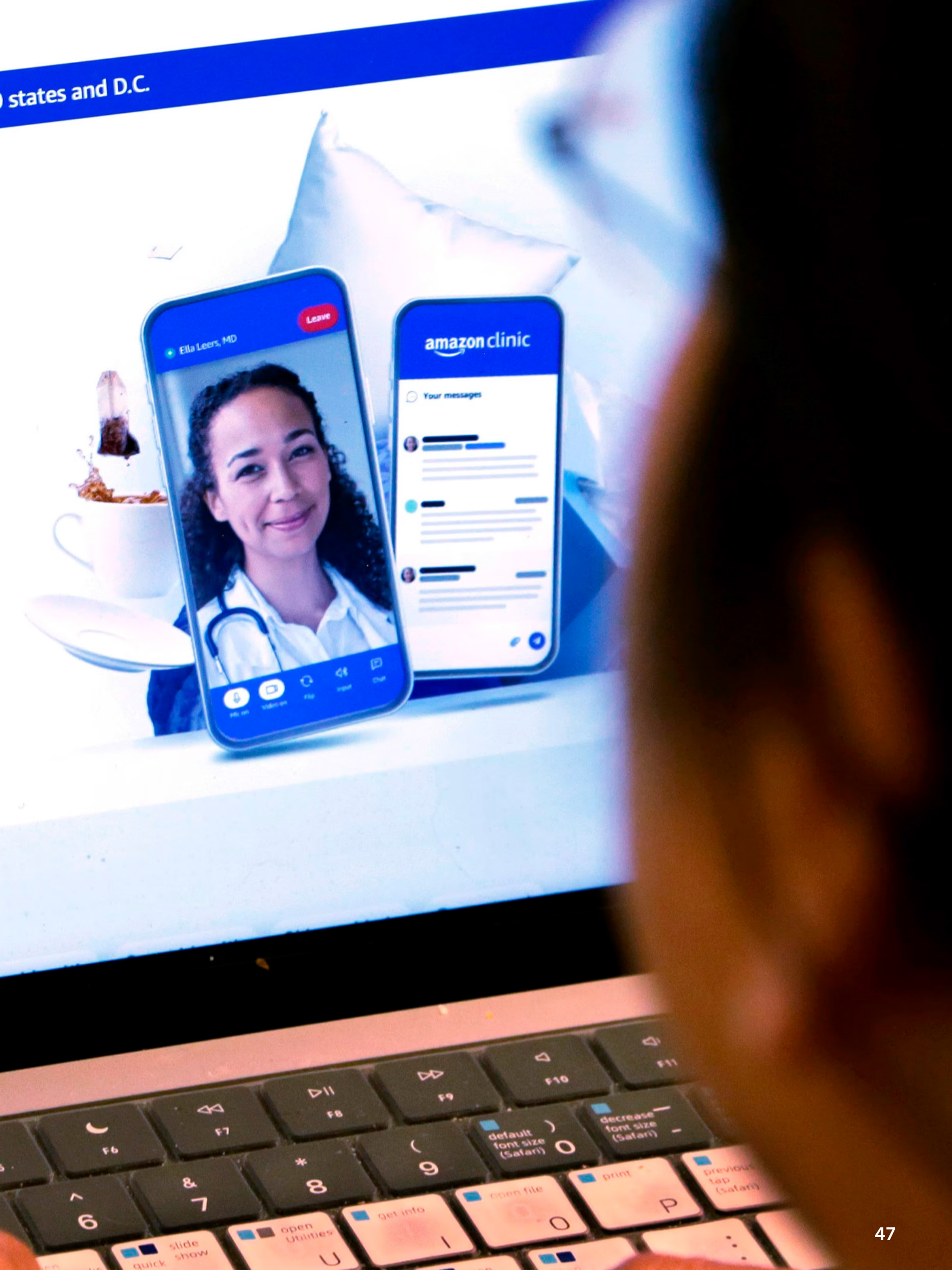
**Messaging available in 34 states*

Find a treatment

Choose a condition to learn more, see prices, and get started.

states and D.C.



That's cheaper than the cost of many in-person visits with a doctor, which can run over $100 for people without insurance or coverage that makes them pay a high deductible.

While virtual visits can improve access to help, some doctors worry that they also lead to care fragmentation and can make it harder to track a patient's overall health. That could happen if a patient has a regular doctor who doesn't learn about the virtual visit from another provider.

In addition to virtual care, Amazon also sells prescription drugs through its Amazon Pharmacy business and has been building its presence with in-patient care.

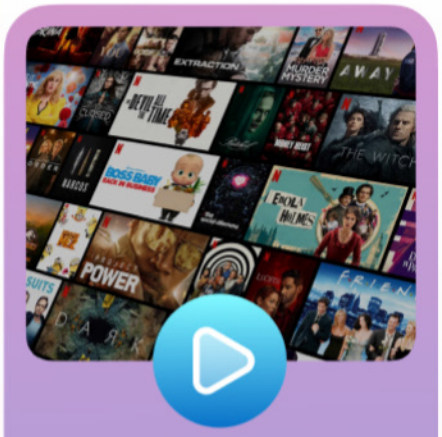
Earlier this year, Amazon also closed a $3.9 billion acquisition of the membership-based primary care provider One Medical, which had about 815,000 customers and 214 medical offices in more than 20 markets.

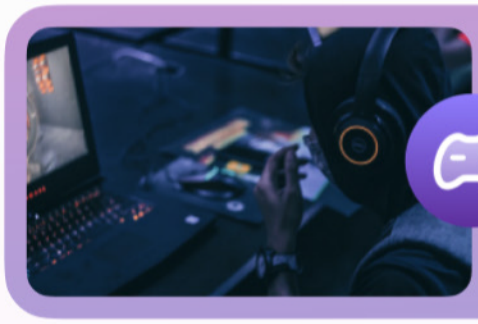
One Medical offers both in-person care and virtual visits.

Anti-monopoly groups had called on the Federal Trade Commission to block the deal, arguing it would endanger patient privacy and help make the retailer more dominant in the marketplace. The agency didn't block the deal but said it won't rule out future challenges.

That deal was the first acquisition made under Amazon CEO Andy Jassy, who took over from founder Jeff Bezos in 2021. Jassy sees health care as a growth opportunity for the company.

ClearVPN





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Amazon has begun offering its Fresh grocery delivery service to customers who aren't Prime members.

The initial rollout will only be available in a dozen cities, including Boston, Phoenix, Dallas and San Francisco, the company told customers Wednesday in an emailed announcement.

Previously, Amazon had only offered grocery deliveries for Prime members, who pay $139 a year for faster shipping and other perks.

Non-Prime members who're interested in trying out the service will pay $13.95 for deliveries under $50. That's $4 more than Prime members have to pay for the same order size.

Deliveries for orders between $50 and $100 will cost $10.95, and orders over $100 will incur a $7.95 fee. The company said pick-up orders are free from select metro areas.

Amazon operates 44 Fresh grocery stores across the country, most of which are located in California, Illinois, Virginia and Washington state. It also operates more than 20 cashier-free convenience stores in the U.S. under the Amazon Go brand and owns Whole Foods, which it purchased in 2017 for $13.7 billion.

But despite its growing ambitions to be a major player in the sector, the company has encountered challenges finding the right formula for its business and gaining significant market share away from competitors like Walmart and Kroger.

Neil Saunders, managing director of GlobalData Retail, said that in theory, Amazon's decision to open up grocery deliveries for non-Prime

Credit card only.
Gift cards not accepted.
Scan QR code in app
prior to scanning groceries.
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Credit, Debit and EBT only
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Search or key in item
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RAISIN, ROSEMARY & PECAN
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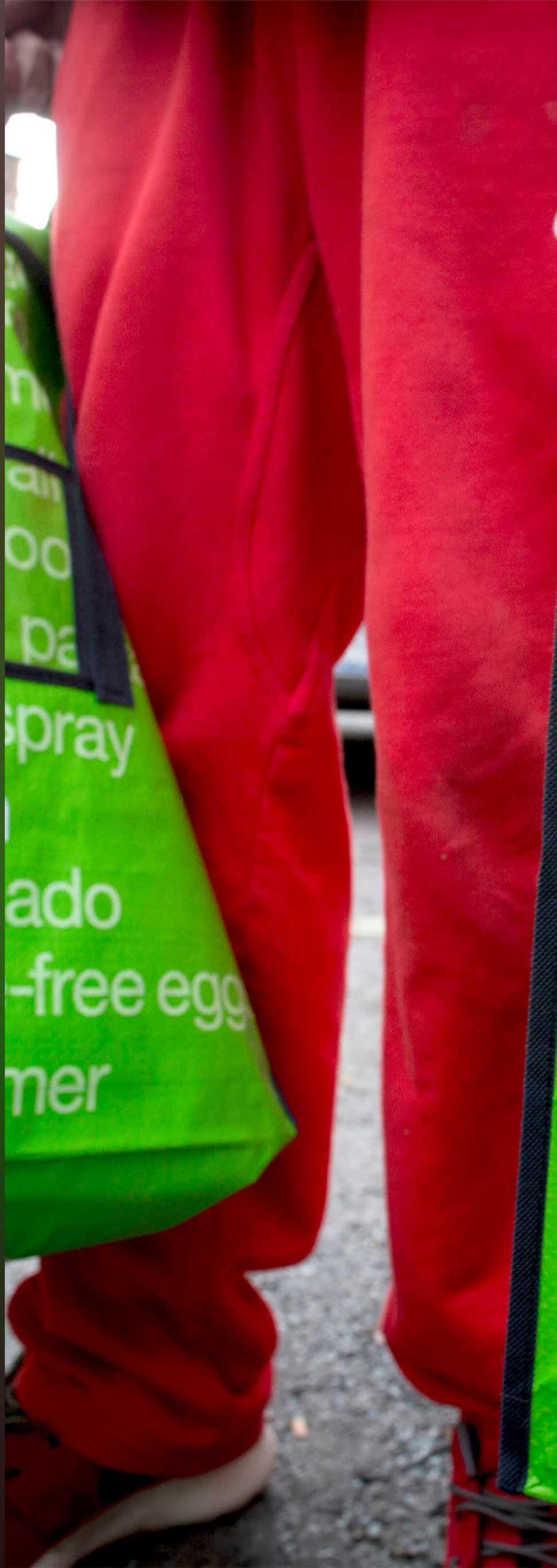
members makes sense since it enlarges its customer base, which is critical to drive growth.

"However, given that Prime membership penetration is extremely high, the scale of the upside remains to be seen and it is likely that further changes will be needed to help move the business forward," Saunders said in an emailed statement.

Meanwhile, the company has also been trimming costs by closing some Amazon Fresh and Go stores and cutting hundreds of jobs as part of a restricting plan across its Whole Foods and Fresh grocery stores. It has also paused expansion on Fresh supermarkets as it aims to find the right formula that will allow it to scale its business.

In a blog post, the company also provided a look into two redesigned Fresh stores in Schaumburg and Oak Lawn, Illinois. It says the new format provides more product selections, low prices on more items and greater convenience during checkout. They also feature Krispy Kreme Doughnut shops.



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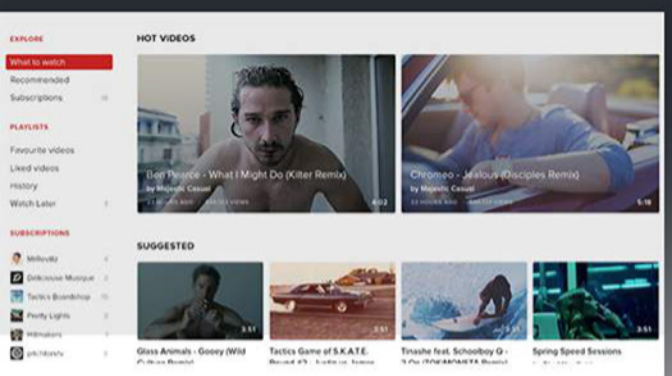

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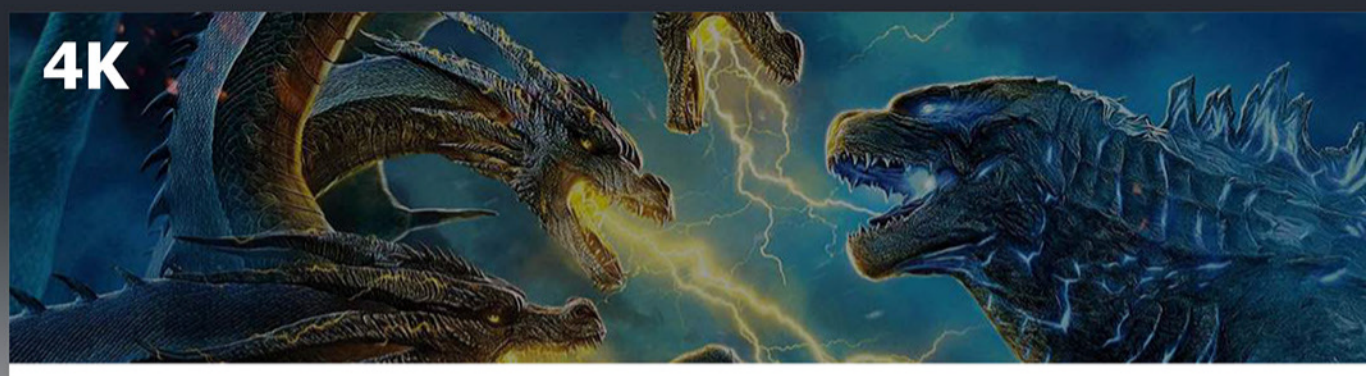

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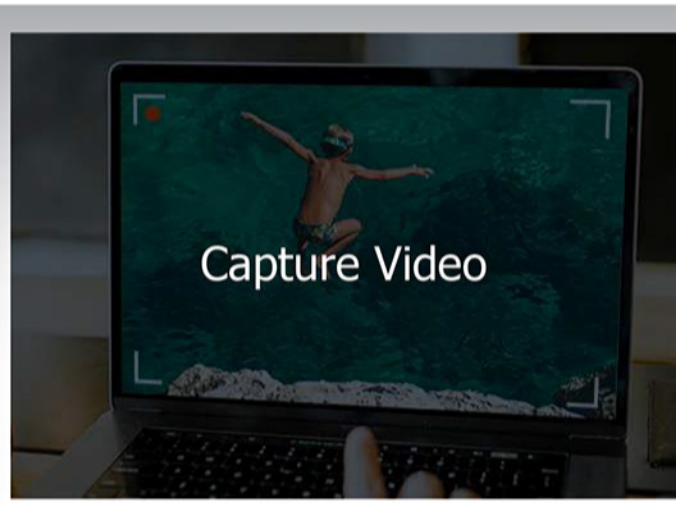

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I know we just met but
I've seen you here
before
Maybe in my dreams?
But it was you, I'm sure

Apple's tvOS 17 update might not be quite as exciting as iOS 17 or macOS Sonoma. Still, it offers a host of exciting features and enhancements to the Apple TV 4K, solidifying its position as a central hub for entertainment and communication in the home.

Erica Daniels
FaceTime Video
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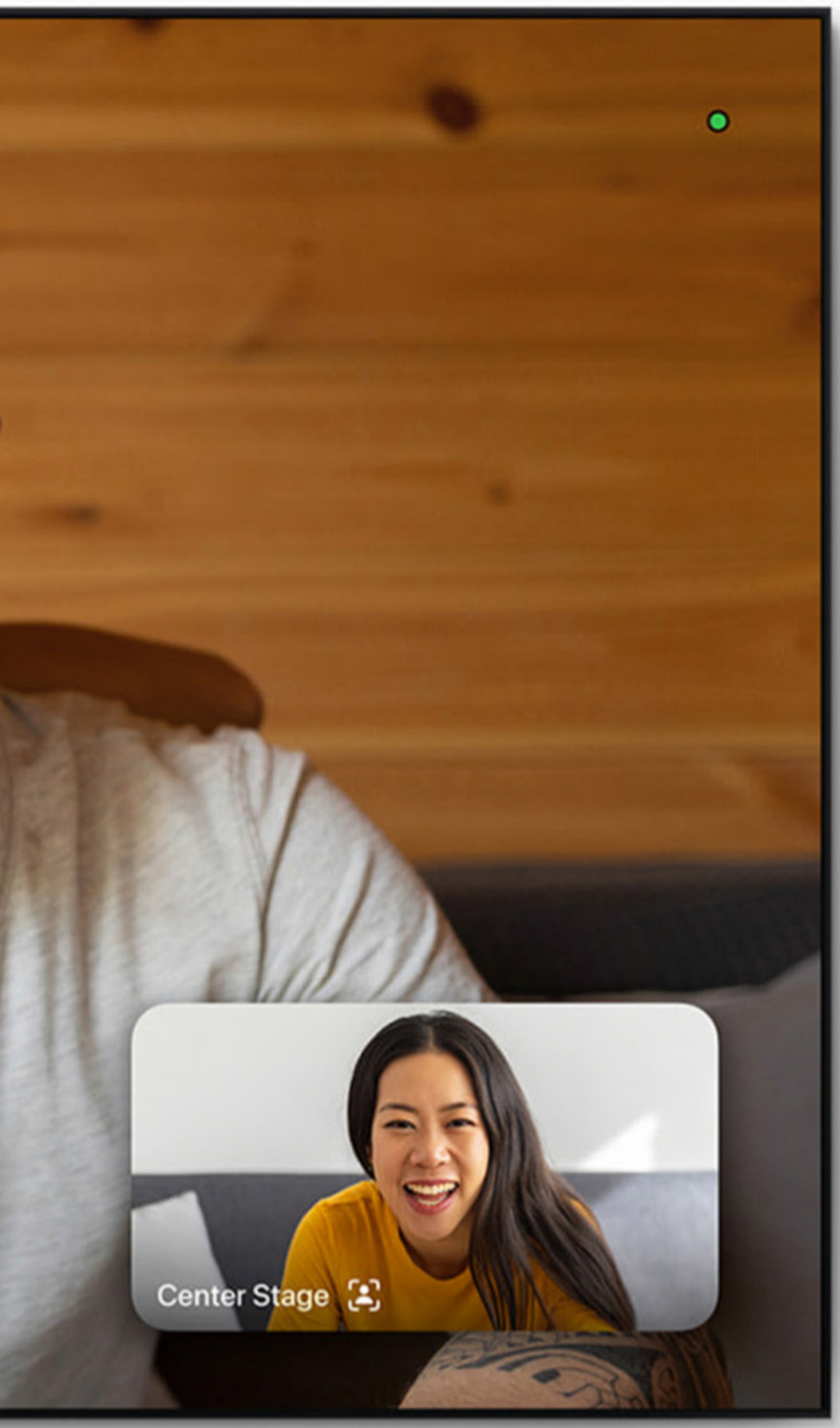
SharePlay
Mute
Camera
End



INTRODUCING FACETIME ON APPLE TV

The highlight of tvOS 17 is undoubtedly the addition of FaceTime to Apple TV 4K. With this new feature, users can now enjoy video calls with family and friends on the big screen in their living rooms. This integration not only enhances the FaceTime experience but also transforms Apple TV 4K into a more immersive communication device and further elevates the Apple ecosystem into a hub for families, entertainment, business, and connection.

Users can initiate FaceTime calls directly from their TV or hand off calls from their iPhone or iPad to the Apple TV. The introduction of Center Stage ensures that participants remain perfectly framed on the screen, even as they move around during the call. Additionally, gesture-based reactions add a fun and interactive element, allowing users to generate on-screen effects like hearts or fireworks.

The versatility of Continuity Camera support allows Apple TV 4K to wirelessly connect to the user's iPhone or iPad, utilizing the device's camera and microphone to bring participants together on the TV. The introduction of Split View further enhances the FaceTime experience, enabling users to enjoy watching shows or movies with loved ones during a SharePlay session while simultaneously participating in a FaceTime call.

tvOS 17 not only brings FaceTime to Apple TV 4K but also opens up the platform to popular **video conferencing apps like Zoom and Webex.** This integration empowers users to

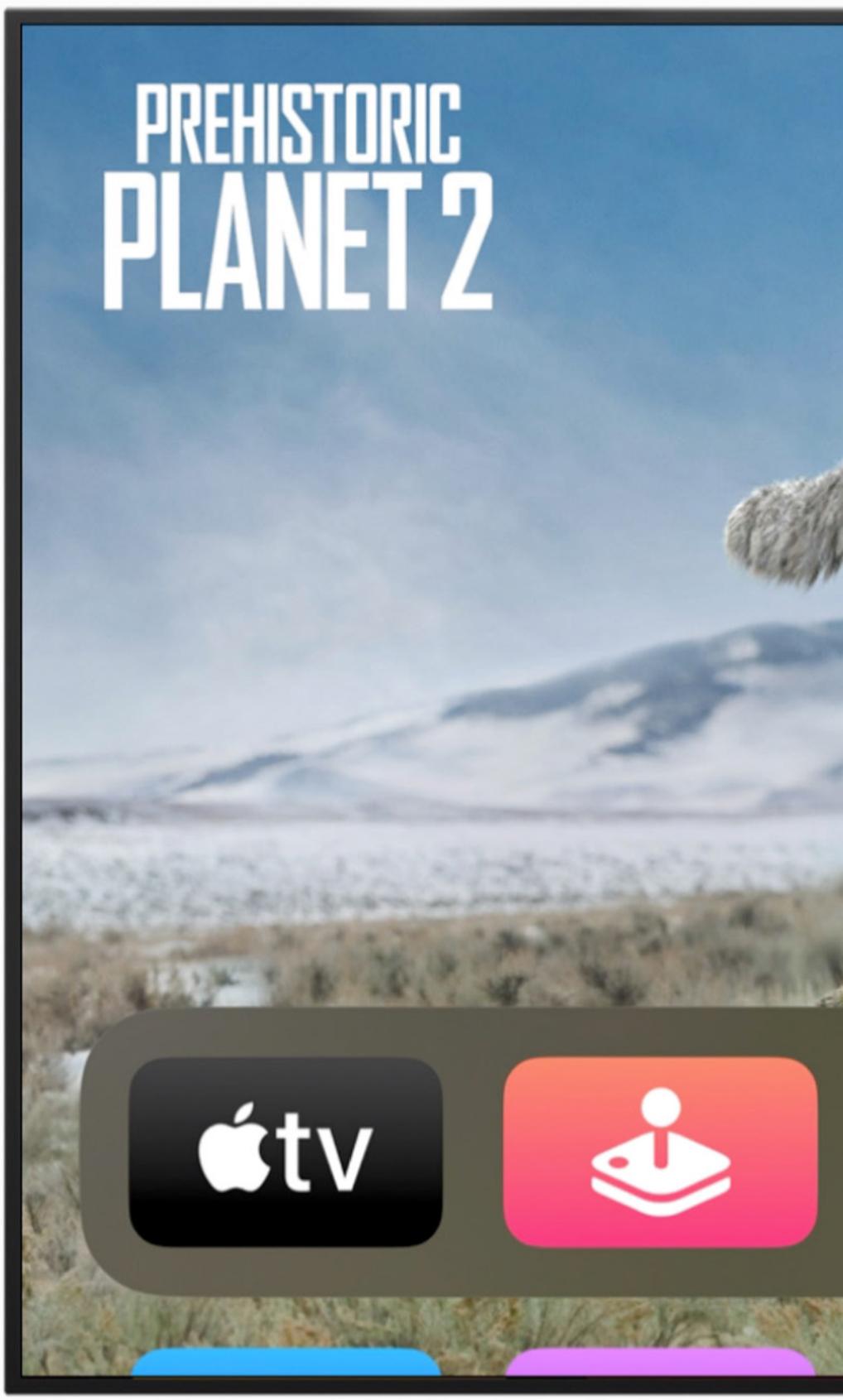
leverage these communication tools directly from their living room's biggest screen, making remote meetings and virtual gatherings more engaging and convenient. With the help of Continuity Camera APIs, developers can integrate the iPhone or iPad camera and microphone into tvOS apps, creating exciting shared and immersive entertainment experiences for users.

KARAOKE WITH CONTINUITY CAMERA

Apple Music Sing introduces a fun and entertaining karaoke feature to Apple TV 4K. Users can now sing along to their favorite tracks while using Continuity Camera to see themselves onscreen and apply entertaining filters, adding an extra layer of enjoyment to the karaoke experience. The **integration of Continuity Camera extends beyond FaceTime** and Apple Music Sing, providing developers with opportunities to create innovative and engaging experiences for Apple TV users and helps families connect, even when they're far apart. Features like these are undoubtedly inspired by the COVID-19 pandemic.

IMPROVED CONTROL CENTER

tvOS 17 introduces an overhauled Control Center, making it easier for users to access key settings and information throughout the entire Apple TV experience. The Control Center now displays system status, including the time and active profile, and expands to show other helpful details based on the user's activity. The revamped Control Center enhances the seamless integration of Apple TV and iPhone, offering the ability to locate the Siri Remote



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Front Door
LIVE
FAVORITE SCENES
Movie Time
Good Night
Party Time
Dinner
Good Morning
Leaving Home

with ease. By launching the Apple TV remote inside Control Center on the iPhone, users can track down their Siri Remote (2nd generation or later) effortlessly. As users get closer to the remote, an on-screen circle grows in size to guide their movement, ensuring that the remote is never lost in the depths of a couch or behind furniture.

Moreover, when using the remote on the iPhone to wake up and control Apple TV, users are automatically switched to their profile, ensuring access to their recently watched shows and personalized recommendations. The update also **saves additional settings and preferences** for each user profile, including system language and paired AirPods, delivering an even more personalized and seamless user experience.

MORE HUGE ENHANCEMENTS

Apple Fitness+ receives a boost with tvOS 17, introducing new features like Custom Plans, Stacks, and Audio Focus. Custom Plans offer users the ability to receive personalized workout or meditation schedules based on their preferences, schedule, and desired workout duration. Stacks allow users to select multiple workouts and meditations to seamlessly do them back-to-back, enhancing the flexibility of fitness routines. Audio Focus empowers users to prioritize the volume of the music or the trainers' voices during Fitness+ sessions, ensuring an optimal workout experience.

tvOS 17 also upgrades Dolby Vision to version 8.1, enabling Apple TV 4K users to enjoy a more cinematic visual

THE GREAT OUTDOORS
2022

experience with dynamic metadata across a broader range of movies and TV shows. The enhanced Dolby Vision support further elevates the picture quality of content on Apple TV 4K, offering a more immersive and engaging viewing experience.

tvOS 17 introduces support for third-party VPN apps, enabling developers to create VPN applications for Apple TV. This enhancement benefits enterprise and education users who may need access to content on private networks, making Apple TV an even more versatile office and conference room solution in a variety of settings. The update also enhances the screen-saver experience on Apple TV. Users can now enjoy curated Memories from their personal photo library as their Apple TV screen saver, **displaying cherished moments and experiences in stunning visual quality.**

tvOS 17 presents a significant step forward for Apple TV 4K, introducing new features and enhancements that enrich the experience and strengthen the integration within the Apple ecosystem. As the update rolls out in the fall, Apple TV users around the world can look forward to a more engaging and personalized entertainment experience.

Image: Li Lin

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VINTAGE COMPUTER THAT HELPED LAUNCH THE APPLE EMPIRE IS BEING SOLD AT AUCTION

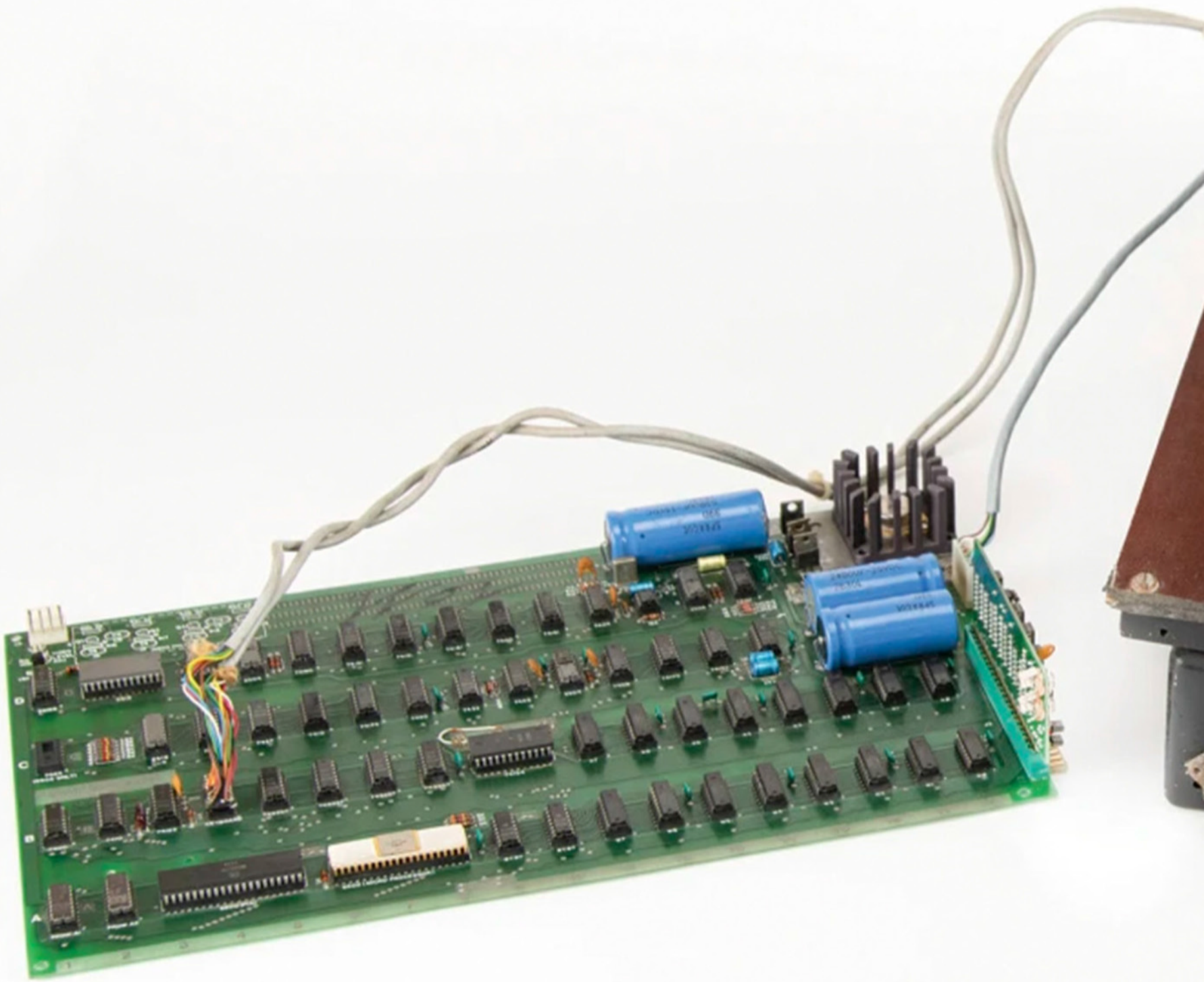


Image: Nikki Brickett

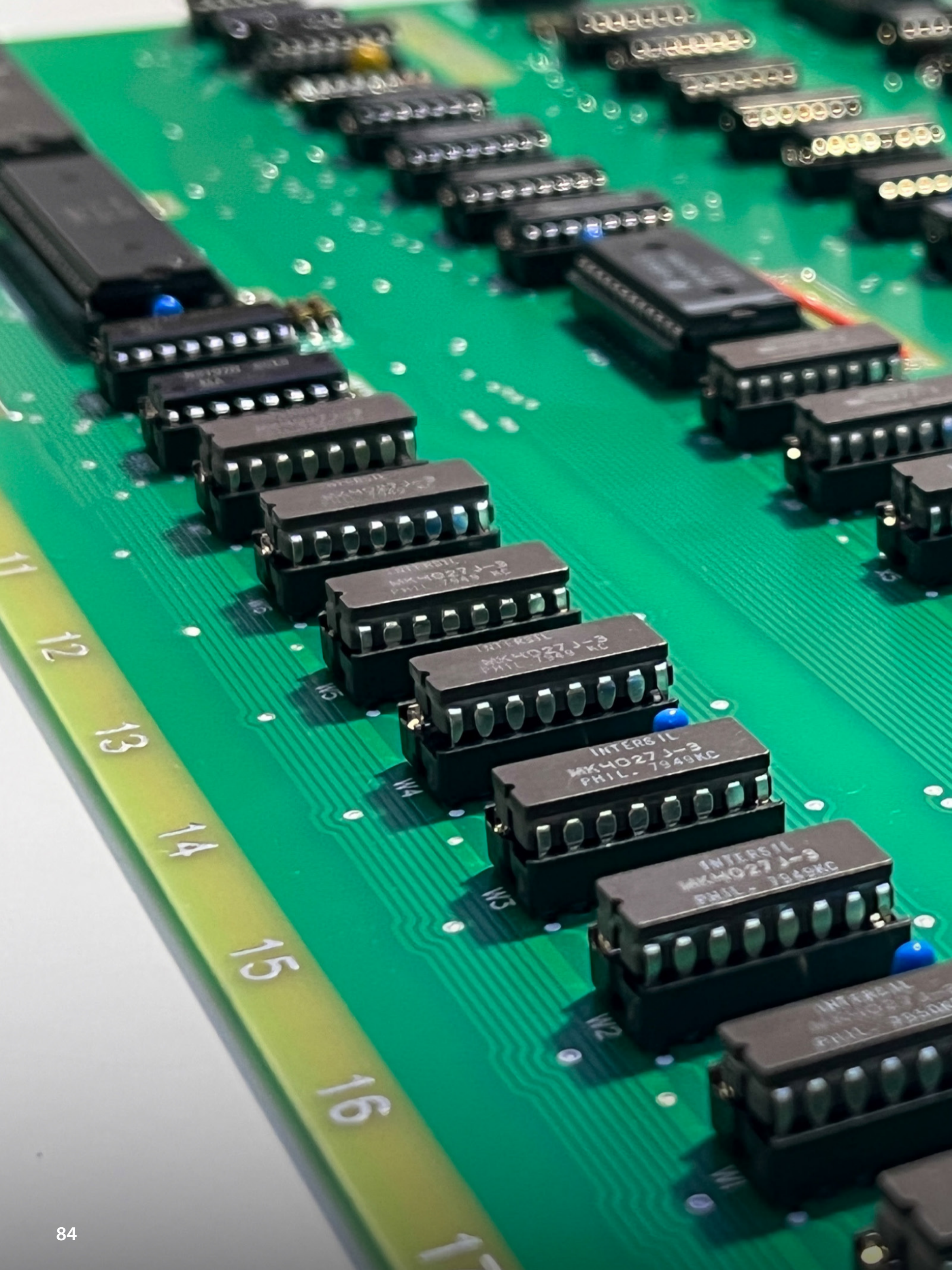
A vintage Apple computer signed by company co-founder Steve Wozniak is being sold at auction.

The Apple-1 set in motion the company that in June became the first publicly traded business to close a trading day with a $3 trillion market value, according to RR Auction in Boston. The computer has been restored to a fully operational state and comes with a custom-built case with a built-in keyboard, the agency said.

“It’s an incredibly rare commodity,” said Tim Bajarin, chairman of Creative Strategies, a technology research firm with deep knowledge of the industry. “You can trace the growth of the PC industry to the Apple-1.”

The computer, which originally sold for about $666, is expected to sell for about $200,000 at an auction that runs through Aug. 24. An Apple-1 prototype sold last year for nearly $700,000.

EMERGENCIES
CONTROL
NO ADMIT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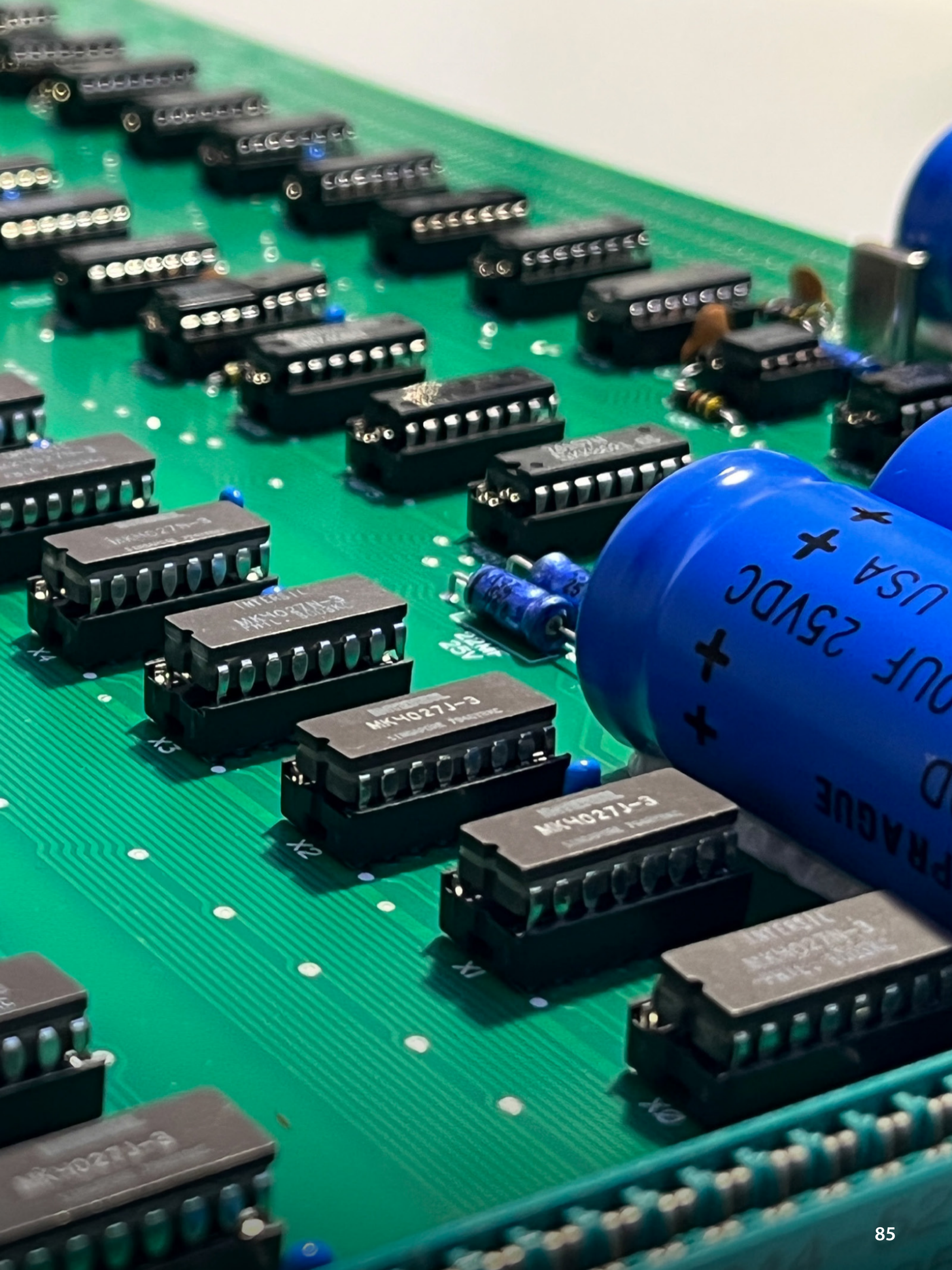
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V-HOLD
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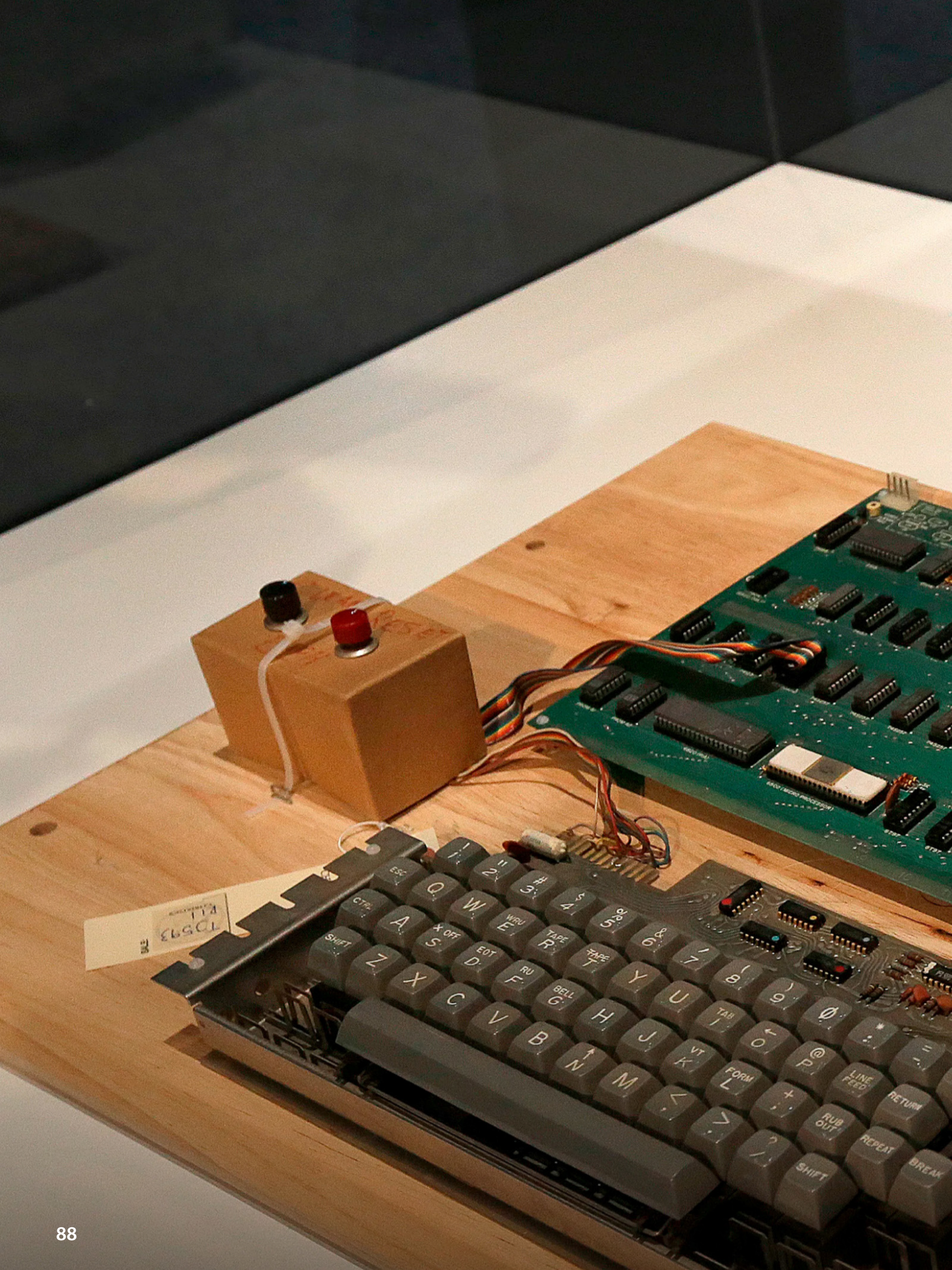
CONTRAST
HAPPY 30TH BIRTHDAY APPLE!
APPLE COMPUTER CO.
APPLE-1
APPLE COMPUTER CO.
POWER

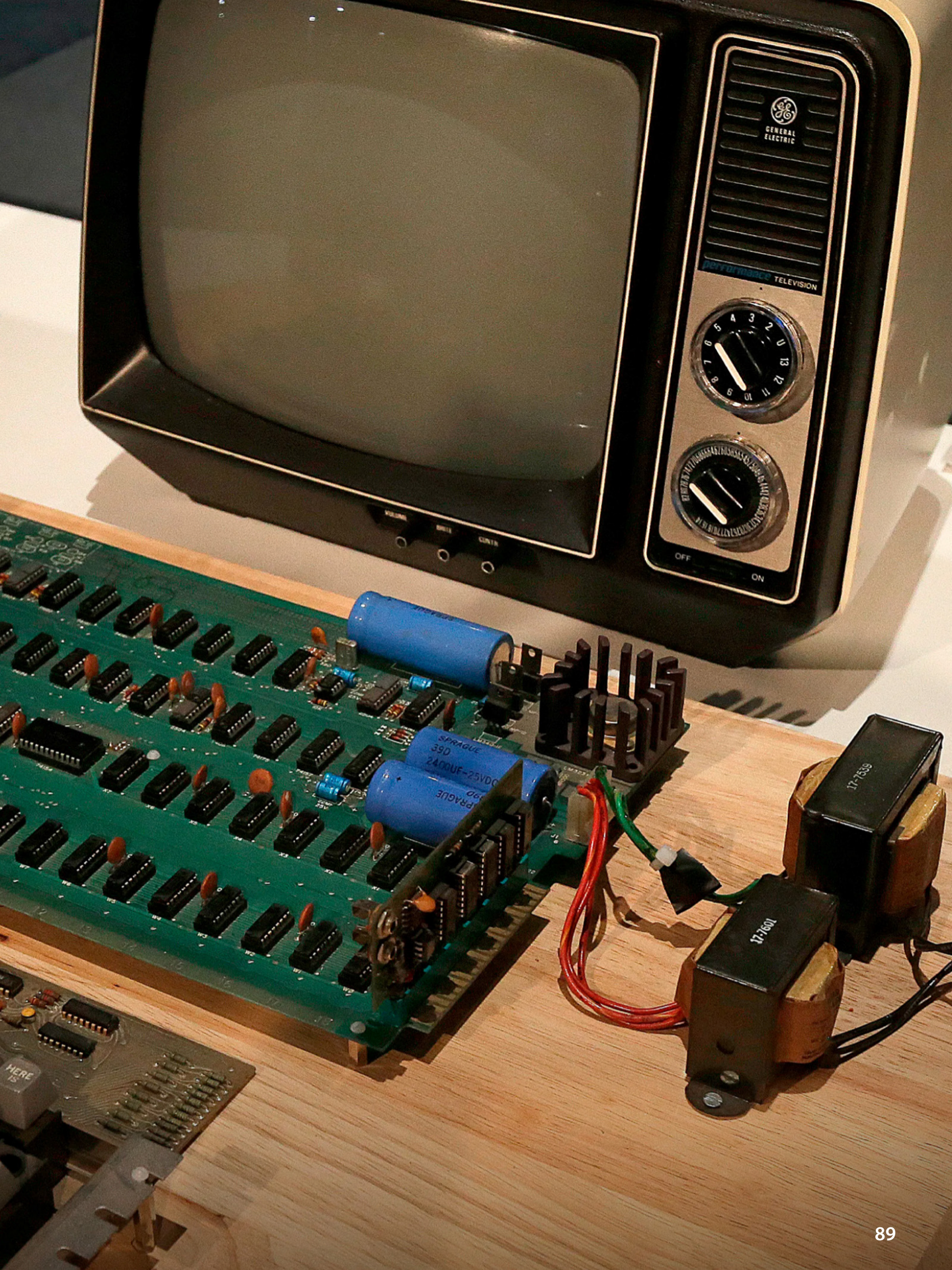
"Before this, the idea of having a personal computer was totally outrageous," Bajarin said.

About 200 were manufactured in Steve Jobs' garage in Los Altos, California, in 1976 and 1977 and about 175 of them were sold, RR's Executive Vice President Bobby Livingston said.

"It is the legendary computer that launched Apple," he said.

Jobs approached Paul Terrell, owner of The Byte Shop in Mountain View, California, and he agreed to buy 50 Apple-1 computers, but only if they were fully assembled, according to RR Auction. The Apple-1 thus became one of the first personal computers that did not require soldering by the purchaser, RR said, although it did not come with a power supply, case, keyboard or monitor.




GENERAL ELECTRIC
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It was followed by the introduction of the Apple-2 in 1977, which revolutionized the personal computing industry.

The Apple-1 up for auction was signed "Woz" by Wozniak at an event at Bryant University in 2017. The signature "adds to the desirability," Livingston said.

It was acquired used by the owner in 1980 at a computer hobbyist show in Framingham, Massachusetts, and was used throughout the 1980s. It was brought to an operational state earlier this year by Apple expert Corey Cohen, the auction house said.

The auction also includes Apple company check No. 2 signed by Jobs and Wozniak and dated March 19, 1976.

The check for $116.97 was made out to Ramlor Inc., a circuit board maker, and experts think it was likely linked to the production of the first Apple-1 computers, RR Auction said. The check was expected to sell for $50,000, but early bidding has already surpassed that total.

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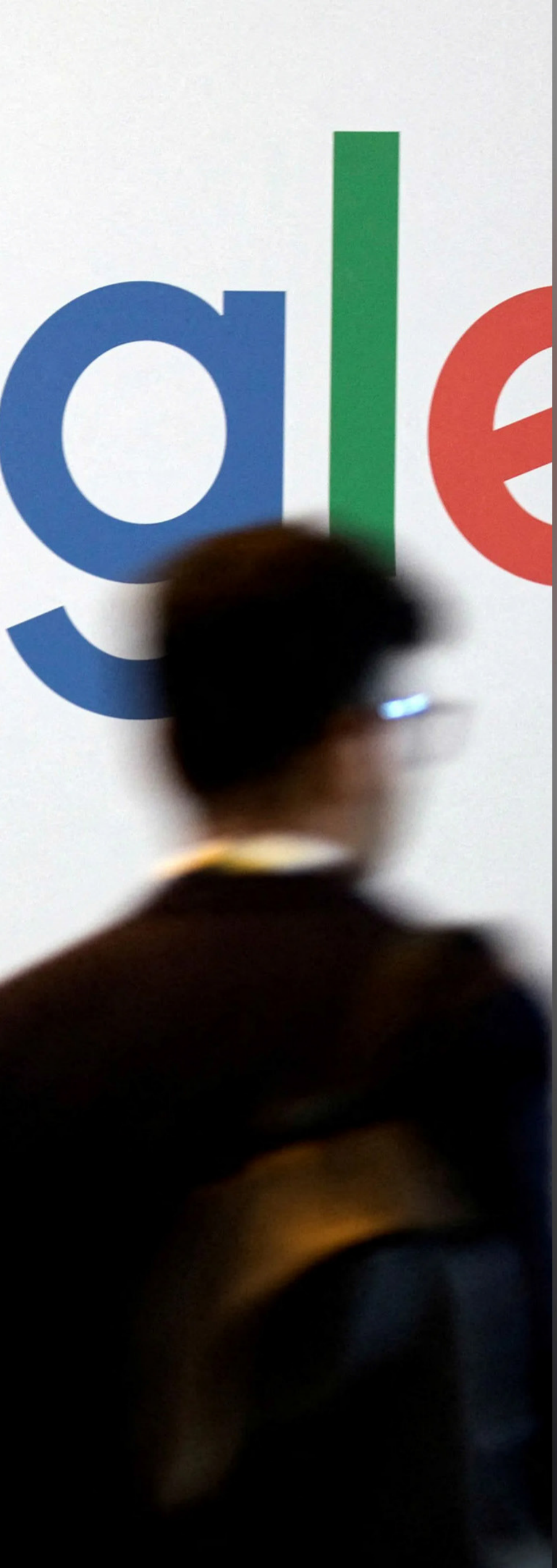
CHATBOTS SOMETIMES MAKE THINGS UP. NOT EVERYONE THINKS AI'S HALLUCINATION PROBLEM IS FIXABLE

ChatGP



Spend enough time with ChatGPT and other artificial intelligence chatbots and it doesn't take long for them to spout falsehoods.

Described as hallucination, confabulation or just plain making things up, it's now a problem for every business, organization and high school student trying to get a generative AI system to compose documents and get work done. Some are using it on tasks with the potential for high-stakes consequences, from psychotherapy to researching and writing legal briefs.

"I don't think that there's any model today that that doesn't suffer from some hallucination," said Daniela Amodei, co-founder and president of Anthropic, maker of the chatbot Claude 2.

"They're really just sort of designed to predict the next word," Amodei said. "And so there will be some rate at which the model does that inaccurately."

Anthropic, ChatGPT-maker OpenAI and other major developers of AI systems known as large language models say they're working to make them more truthful.

How long that will take — and whether they will ever be good enough to, say, safely dole out medical advice — remains to be seen.

"This isn't fixable," said Emily Bender, a linguistics professor and director of the University of Washington's Computational Linguistics Laboratory. "It's inherent in the mismatch between the technology and the proposed use cases."

A lot is riding on the reliability of generative AI technology. The McKinsey Global Institute projects it will add the equivalent of $2.6 trillion to

$4.4 trillion to the global economy. Chatbots are only one part of that frenzy, which also includes technology that can generate new images, video, music and computer code. Nearly all of the tools include some language component.

Google is already pitching a news-writing AI product to news organizations, for which accuracy is paramount. The Associated Press is also exploring use of the technology as part of a partnership with OpenAI, which is paying to use part of AP's text archive to improve its AI systems.

In partnership with India's hotel management institutes, computer scientist Ganesh Bagler has been working for years to get AI systems, including a ChatGPT precursor, to invent recipes for South Asian cuisines, such as novel versions of rice-based biryani. A single "hallucinated" ingredient could be the difference between a tasty and inedible meal.

When Sam Altman, the CEO of OpenAI, visited India in June, the professor at the Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology Delhi had some pointed questions.

"I guess hallucinations in ChatGPT are still acceptable, but when a recipe comes out hallucinating, it becomes a serious problem," Bagler said, standing up in a crowded campus auditorium to address Altman on the New Delhi stop of the U.S. tech executive's world tour.

"What's your take on it?" Bagler eventually asked.

Altman expressed optimism, if not an outright commitment.

"I think we will get the hallucination problem to a much, much better place," Altman said. "I think it will take us a year and a half, two years.

Something like that. But at that point we won't still talk about these. There's a balance between creativity and perfect accuracy, and the model will need to learn when you want one or the other."

But for some experts who have studied the technology, such as University of Washington linguist Bender, those improvements won't be enough.

Bender describes a language model as a system for "modeling the likelihood of different strings of word forms," given some written data it's been trained upon.

It's how spell checkers are able to detect when you've typed the wrong word. It also helps power automatic translation and transcription services, "smoothing the output to look more like typical text in the target language," Bender said. Many people rely on a version of this technology whenever they use the "autocomplete" feature when composing text messages or emails.

The latest crop of chatbots such as ChatGPT, Claude 2 or Google's Bard try to take that to the next level, by generating entire new passages of text, but Bender said they're still just repeatedly selecting the most plausible next word in a string.

When used to generate text, language models "are designed to make things up. That's all they do," Bender said. They are good at mimicking forms of writing, such as legal contracts, television scripts or sonnets.

"But since they only ever make things up, when the text they have extruded happens to be interpretable as something we deem correct,

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that is by chance," Bender said. "Even if they can be tuned to be right more of the time, they will still have failure modes — and likely the failures will be in the cases where it's harder for a person reading the text to notice, because they are more obscure."

Those errors are not a huge problem for the marketing firms that have been turning to Jasper AI for help writing pitches, said the company's president, Shane Orlick.

"Hallucinations are actually an added bonus," Orlick said. "We have customers all the time that tell us how it came up with ideas — how Jasper created takes on stories or angles that they would have never thought of themselves."

The Texas-based startup works with partners like OpenAI, Anthropic, Google or Facebook parent Meta to offer its customers a smorgasbord of AI language models tailored to their needs. For someone concerned about accuracy, it might offer up Anthropic's model, while someone concerned with the security of their proprietary source data might get a different model, Orlick said.

Orlick said he knows hallucinations won't be easily fixed. He's counting on companies like Google, which he says must have a "really high standard of factual content" for its search engine, to put a lot of energy and resources into solutions.

"I think they have to fix this problem," Orlick said. "They've got to address this. So I don't know if it's ever going to be perfect, but it'll probably just continue to get better and better over time."

Reductionist approach

Systems Thinking

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Real-Word Graph

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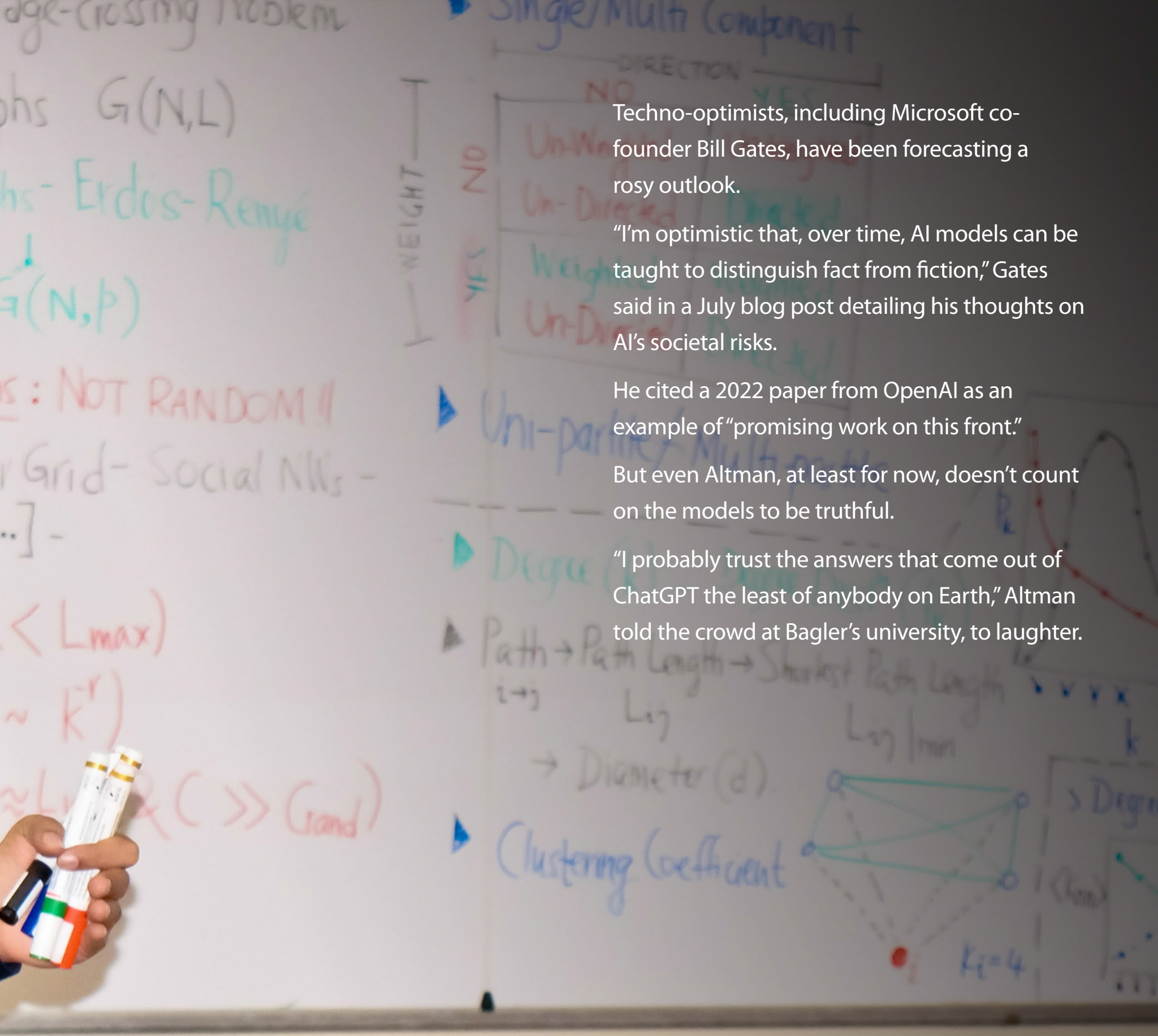

Techno-optimists, including Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates, have been forecasting a rosy outlook.

"I'm optimistic that, over time, AI models can be taught to distinguish fact from fiction," Gates said in a July blog post detailing his thoughts on AI's societal risks.

He cited a 2022 paper from OpenAI as an example of "promising work on this front."

But even Altman, at least for now, doesn't count on the models to be truthful.

"I probably trust the answers that come out of ChatGPT the least of anybody on Earth," Altman told the crowd at Bagler's university, to laughter.

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2023 MERCEDES-BENZ EQS VS. 2023 BMW I7

BMW and Mercedes-Benz are well known for their 7 Series and S-Class flagship sedans. But now you should get familiar with their electric counterparts: the BMW i7 and Mercedes EQS sedan. These two all-electric sedans are among the most expensive, technologically advanced and luxurious electric vehicles on the market. But which one most successfully represents the pinnacle of EV design? Experts compared the i7 and EQS to find out.

DRIVING RANGE & CHARGING

The EQS ' most efficient 450+ trim level boasts an impressive EPA-estimated driving range of 350 miles on a full charge. Even better, it easily surpassed that estimate by driving 422 miles on real-world range test. Drivers has tested other EQS versions and found they all can go farther than their EPA estimates.

For 2023, the i7 comes in just one version: the xDrive60. It has an EPA-estimated driving range of up to 318 miles. The test car had an estimated range of 308 miles and managed to go 320 miles in the real-world test. BMW will be coming out with a 2024 eDrive50 version that should have even more maximum range, but no estimates were available at the time of our article's publication.

If you're traveling out of town or need to top up the battery, an appropriate DC fast-charging station can charge the EQS from 10% to 80% capacity in about 31 minutes. The i7 can charge a little quicker, but not enough to make a significant difference.

S EQ 5804E

M PA 2518 E

Both sedans are impressive, but the EQS gets the win here by way of its longer range.

Winner: Mercedes EQS

DRIVING, COMFORT & INTERIOR SPACE

These large luxury sedans are easy to drive and offer different levels of brake regeneration, including one-pedal driving that allows you to use the accelerator pedal for acceleration and braking. But if you want to have some fun behind the wheel, the i7 is the more athletic of the two in their basic trims.

Mercedes models are known for their high level of comfort, and the EQS is no exception. However, the i7's ride is almost unrivaled and has superior seats that provide greater comfort. When it comes to noise, both EVs are like bank vaults, effectively muting all outside sound. The EQS and i7 have comparable headroom and front legroom, but the i7 has about 2 more inches of rear legroom.

Winner: BMW i7

POWER & PERFORMANCE

Mercedes offers four versions of the EQS sedan. The EQS 450+ and 450 4Matic models produce 329 and 355 horsepower, respectively. Then there's the 580 4Matic with its 516 horsepower and the top-dog AMG EQS, which has 649 horsepower.

The i7's lineup isn't quite as extensive. The 2023 model comes in the 536-horsepower xDrive60 trim only. For 2024, it will be joined by the 449-horsepower eDrive50 and 650-horsepower M70. BMW says the M70 can sprint from 0 to

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60 mph in an impressively quick 3.5 seconds. Mercedes, for its part, says the AMG EQS can hit 60 mph in 3.4 seconds. Suffice it to say, you won't be wanting for power in the top specs of either sedan.

Winner: tie

TECHNOLOGY & PRICING

These flagship EVs are expensive but come loaded with lots of features. The EQS' starting price of $105,550 includes many standard advanced driver aids, an adaptive air suspension, a 15-speaker Burmester audio system, large display screens and more. The pricier models boast Mercedes' striking Hyperscreen consisting of three large displays spanning the width of the dashboard. And as with any Mercedes, you have a choice of many optional features.

The 2024 i7 eDrive50 has a starting price of $106,695. The BMW is well equipped but offers a few less standard advanced driver aids. However, the i7 offers optional features not found in the EQS or in most vehicles such as a panoramic sunroof laced with LED lighting, doors that fully open or close with a push of a button, and a 31-inch rear seat entertainment screen. The i7 also has higher-quality interior materials than the EQS, especially in the rear seating area.

Winner: BMW i7

Both of these sedans impress with their quality, power and prestige. The Mercedes-Benz EQS will be an intriguing choice for shoppers desiring maximum driving range. But it's the i7 that delivers a more comprehensive luxury experience by way of its superior comfort and design.

Image: Paul Steuber

AUTOMAKER TESLA IS OPENING MORE SHOWROOMS ON TRIBAL LANDS TO AVOID STATE LAWS BARRING DIRECT SALES

Tesla is ramping up efforts to open showrooms on tribal lands where it can sell directly to consumers, circumventing laws in states that bar vehicle manufacturers from also being retailers in favor of the dealership model.

Mohegan Sun, a casino and entertainment complex in Connecticut owned by the federally recognized Mohegan Tribe, announced this week that the California-based electric automaker will open a showroom with a sales and delivery center this fall on its sovereign property where the state's law doesn't apply.

Image: Vlad Tchompalov

The news comes after another new Tesla showroom was announced in June, set to open in 2025 on lands of the Oneida Indian Nation in upstate New York.

"I think it was a move that made complete sense," said Lori Brown, executive director of the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters, which has lobbied for years to change Connecticut's law.

"It is just surprising that it took this long, because Tesla had really tried, along with Lucid and Rivian," she said, referring to two other electric carmakers. "Anything that puts more electric vehicles on the road is a good thing for the public."

Brown noted that lawmakers with car dealerships that are active in their districts, no matter their political affiliation, have traditionally opposed bills allowing direct-to-consumer sales.

The Connecticut Automotive Retail Association, which has opposed such bills for years, says there needs to be a balance between respecting tribal sovereignty and "maintaining a level playing field" for all car dealerships in the state.

"We respect the Mohegan Tribe's sovereignty and the unique circumstance in which they operate their businesses on Tribal land but we strongly believe that this does not change the discussion about Tesla and other EV manufacturers with direct-to-consumer sales, and we continue to oppose that model," Hayden Reynolds, the association's chairperson, said in a statement. "Connecticut's dealer franchise laws benefit consumers and provide a competitive marketplace."

Image: Vlad Tchompalov

Image: Manny Becerra

Over the years in numerous states, Tesla has sought and been denied dealership licenses, pushed for law changes and challenged decisions in courts. The company scored a victory earlier this year when Delaware's Supreme Court overturned a ruling upholding a decision by state officials to prohibit Tesla from selling its cars to directly customers.

At least 16 states have effectively changed their laws to allow Tesla and other direct-to-consumer manufacturers to sell there, said Jeff Aiosa, executive director of the Connecticut dealers association. He doesn't foresee Connecticut changing its law, noting that 32 "original equipment manufacturers," a list that includes major car companies like Toyota and Ford, currently abide by it.

"It's not fair to have an unlevel playing field when all the other manufacturers abide by the state franchise laws and Tesla wants this exception to go around the law," he said. "I would suggest their pivoting to the sovereign nation is representative of them not wanting to abide by the law."

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Image: Bram Van Oost

Tesla opened its first store as well as a repair shop on Native American land in 2021 in New Mexico. The facility, built in Nambé Pueblo, north of Santa Fe, marked the first time the company partnered with a tribe to get around state laws, though the idea had been in the works for years.

Brian Dear, president of the Tesla Owners Club of New Mexico, predicted at the time that states that are home to tribal nations and also have laws banning direct car sales by manufacturers would likely follow New Mexico's lead.

"I don't believe at all that this will be the last," he said.

Tesla's facility at Mohegan Sun, dubbed the Tesla Sales & Delivery Center, will be located at a shopping and dining pavilion within the sprawling casino complex. Customers will be able to test drive models around the resort. and gamblers will be able to use their loyalty rewards toward Tesla purchases.

Tesla also plans to exhibit its solar and storage products at the location.

Image: Afif Ramdhasuma

DEEP DIVE INTO META'S ALGORITHMS SHOWS THAT AMERICA'S POLITICAL POLARIZATION HAS NO EASY FIX

Meta

Dr. Talia
Stroud
Department of Communication
Studies at UT Austin

The powerful algorithms used by Facebook and Instagram to deliver content to users have increasingly been blamed for amplifying misinformation and political polarization. But a series of groundbreaking studies suggest addressing these challenges is not as simple as tweaking the platforms' software.

The four research papers, published in Science and Nature, also reveal the extent of political echo chambers on Facebook, where conservatives and liberals rely on divergent sources of information, interact with opposing groups and consume distinctly different amounts of misinformation.

Algorithms are the automated systems that social media platforms use to suggest content for users by making assumptions based on the groups, friends, topics and headlines a user has clicked on in the past. While they excel at keeping users engaged, algorithms have been criticized for amplifying misinformation and ideological content that has worsened the country's political divisions.

Proposals to regulate these systems are among the most discussed ideas for addressing social media's role in spreading misinformation and encouraging polarization. But when the researchers changed the algorithms for some users during the 2020 election, they saw little difference.

"We find that algorithms are extremely influential in people's on-platform experiences and there is significant ideological segregation in political news exposure," said Talia Jomini Stroud, director of the Center for Media Engagement at the University of Texas at Austin and one of the

leaders of the studies. "We also find that popular proposals to change social media algorithms did not sway political attitudes."

While political differences are a function of any healthy democracy, polarization occurs when those differences begin to pull citizens apart from each other and the societal bonds they share. It can undermine faith in democratic institutions and the free press.

Significant division can undermine confidence in democracy or democratic institutions and lead to "affective polarization," when citizens begin to view each other more as enemies than legitimate opposition. It's a situation that can lead to violence, as it did when supporters of then-President Donald Trump attacked the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

To conduct the analysis, researchers obtained unprecedented access to Facebook and Instagram data from the 2020 election through a collaboration with Meta, the platforms' owners. The researchers say Meta exerted no control over their findings.

When they replaced the algorithm with a simple chronological listing of posts from friends — an option Facebook recently made available to users — it had no measurable impact on polarization. When they turned off Facebook's reshare option, which allows users to quickly share viral posts, users saw significantly less news from untrustworthy sources and less political news overall, but there were no significant changes to their political attitudes.

Likewise, reducing the content that Facebook users get from accounts with the same ideological alignment had no significant effect

Developer Circles
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Connection
Communication - unication + unity Community
UNITY
Lost News
Having a connection with people that brings you/others together.
Finding People from Past
FRIENDSHIP SHARING
Sharing Experiences
Dev Circles
Family Adventure Happy
Communication with new perspective
Bringing Rechtsinner up & inspiring
DIVERSITY
Share and Smile
Learning
engagement

on polarization, susceptibility to misinformation or extremist views.

Together, the findings suggest that Facebook users seek out content that aligns with their views and that the algorithms help by "making it easier for people to do what they're inclined to do," according to David Lazer, a Northeastern University professor who worked on all four papers.

Eliminating the algorithm altogether drastically reduced the time users spent on either Facebook or Instagram while increasing their time on TikTok, YouTube or other sites, showing just how important these systems are to Meta in the increasingly crowded social media landscape.

In response to the papers, Meta's president for global affairs, Nick Clegg, said the findings showed "there is little evidence that key features of Meta's platforms alone cause harmful 'affective' polarization or has any meaningful impact on key political attitudes, beliefs or behaviors."

Katie Harbath, Facebook's former director of public policy, said they showed the need for greater research on social media and challenged assumptions about the role social media plays in American democracy. Harbath was not involved in the research.

"People want a simple solution and what these studies show is that it's not simple," said Harbath, a fellow at the Bipartisan Policy Center and the CEO of the tech and politics firm Anchor Change. "To me, it reinforces that when it comes to polarization, or people's political beliefs, there's a lot more that goes into this than social media."

One organization that's been critical of Meta's role in spreading misinformation about elections and voting called the research "limited' and noted that it was only a snapshot taken in the midst of an election, and didn't take into account the effects of years of social media misinformation.

Free Press, a non-profit that advocates for civil rights in tech and media, called Meta's use of the research "calculated spin."

"Meta execs are seizing on limited research as evidence that they shouldn't share blame for increasing political polarization and violence," Nora Benavidez, the group's senior counsel and director of digital justice and civil rights said in a statement. "Studies that Meta endorses, which look piecemeal at narrow time periods, shouldn't serve as excuses for allowing lies to spread."

The four studies also revealed the extent of the ideological differences of Facebook users and the different ways that conservatives and liberals use the platform to get news and information about politics.

Conservative Facebook users are more likely to consume content that has been labeled misinformation by fact-checkers. They also have more sources to choose from. The analysis found that among the websites included in political Facebook posts, far more cater to conservatives than liberals.

Overall, 97% of the political news sources on Facebook identified by fact-checkers as having spread misinformation were more popular with conservatives than liberals.

The authors of the papers acknowledged some limitations to their work. While they found that changing Facebook's algorithms had little impact on polarization, they note that the study only covered a few months during the 2020 election, and therefore cannot assess the long-term impact that algorithms have had since their use began years ago.

They also noted that most people get their news and information from a variety of sources — television, radio, the internet and word-of-mouth — and that those interactions could affect people's opinions, too. Many in the United States blame the news media for worsening polarization.

To complete their analyses, the researchers pored over data from millions of users of Facebook and Instagram and surveyed specific users who agreed to participate. All identifying information about specific users was stripped out for privacy reasons.

Lazer, the Northeastern professor, said he was at first skeptical that Meta would give the researchers the access they needed, but was pleasantly surprised. He said the conditions imposed by the company were related to reasonable legal and privacy concerns. More studies from the collaboration will be released in coming months.

"There is no study like this," he said, "There's been a lot of rhetoric about this, but in many ways the research has been quite limited."

PREPARE TO FLICK OFF YOUR INCANDESCENT BULBS FOR GOOD UNDER NEW US RULES THAT KICKED IN THIS WEEK

Get ready to say goodbye to the once ubiquitous incandescent light bulb, pioneered by Thomas Edison more than a century ago. You can thank — or blame — new federal energy efficiency regulations that went into full effect Tuesday. Quite possibly without you even noticing.

The Energy Department rules, which date back to the Obama administration, have been whipsawed in the political process for years. Some conservatives and Republican lawmakers long denounced them for interfering with consumer choice and placing undue burdens on business. Under former President Donald Trump, the Energy Department scrapped them in 2019; the Biden administration subsequently revived them.

Yet by the time Aug. 1 rolled around, the critics had gone quiet, possibly because companies and consumers have already started voting for better lighting efficiency with their wallets.

Here's what you need to know.

WHAT CHANGES UNDER THE NEW RULES?

The rules establish strict new efficiency standards for bulbs used in homes and businesses and bans the manufacture and sale of those that don't meet those requirements. Practical incandescent bulbs, which trace their origin to an 1880 Edison patent, can't meet those standards. Neither can halogen bulbs. The rules also ban imports of less efficient bulbs.

But those requirements carry a bit less heft than they would have several years back, largely because advances in LED technology and manufacturing have dramatically lowered prices and improved quality. LED stands for "light

emitting diode," a semiconductor device that converts electricity directly into light.

Between 2015 and 2020, for instance, the percentage of American households that reported using LED bulbs for most or all of their lighting jumped more than tenfold — from 4% to 47%, according to the Energy Information Administration, an independent federal statistics agency.

SO DO I HAVE TO THROW AWAY MY OLD INCANDESCENTS?

Fortunately not. The rules don't affect bulbs that you already own; they also exempt special purpose incandescents such as those used inside ovens.

But suppose you discard — or give away — your halogen and incandescent bulbs. Odds are good that replacing them with LED bulbs could save you a fair amount of money.

As the rules reinforce existing market changes, the Energy Department believes that U.S. consumers can save almost $3 billion annually on their utility bills. Similarly, it projects that the rules could cut carbon emissions by 222 million metric tons over the next 30 years.

WHY DO LED BULBS SAVE ENERGY AND MONEY?

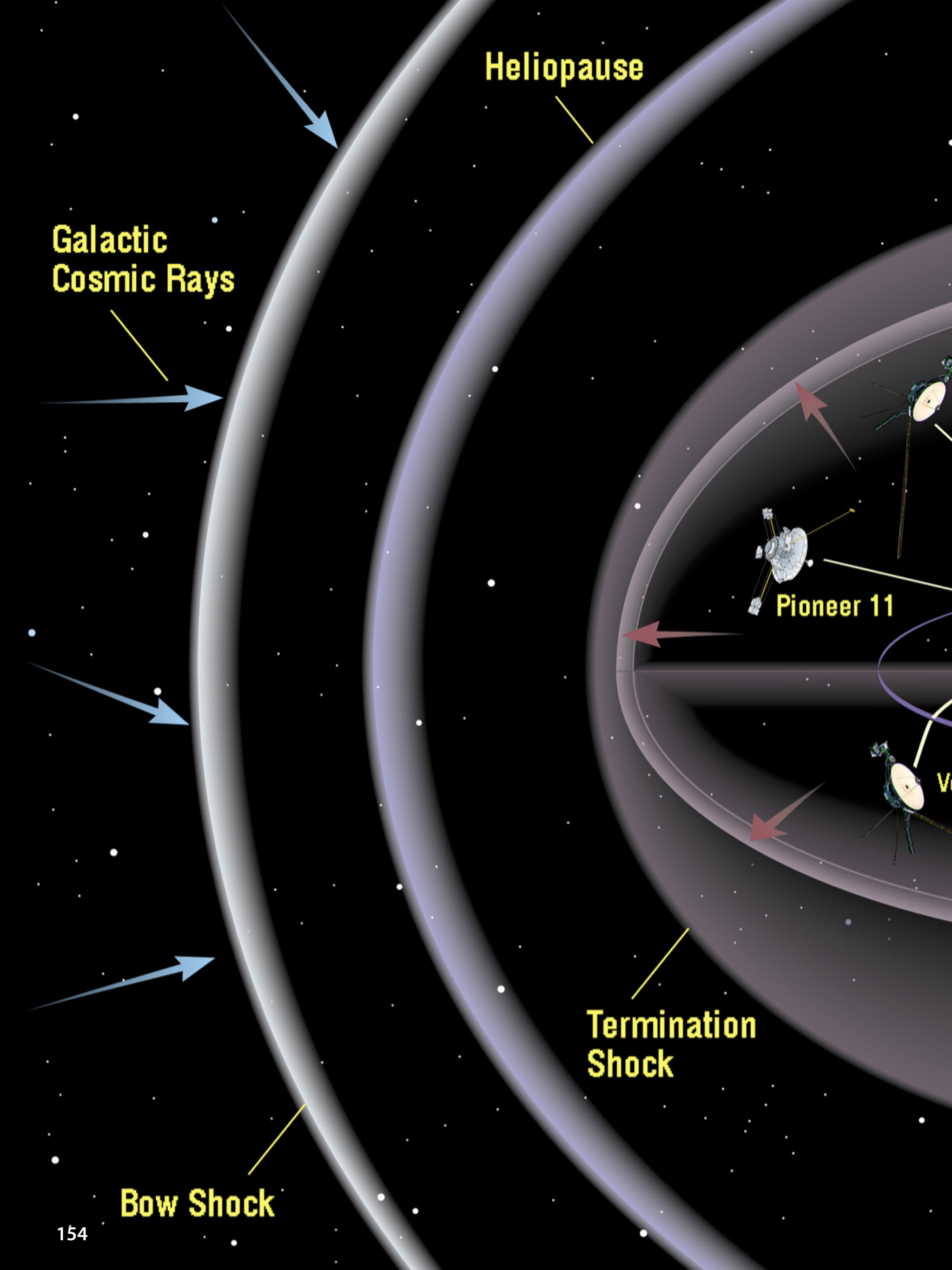
Incandescent bulbs create illumination by running an electric current through a filament that heats it until it glows. Edison's first practical light bulb used a carbonized cotton thread for that purpose; modern bulbs use tungsten filaments in an inert gas.

But incandescents are not very efficient. Only roughly 5% of the energy used by an incandescent bulb produces light; the remaining 95% or so is lost as heat. This is why you let an incandescent bulb cool off before unscrewing it.

They also burn out frequently, requiring replacement roughly every year.

The light-emitting components in LED bulbs, by contrast, are manufactured via the same process used to make computer chips, which makes them extremely efficient. They generate almost no heat and use up to 90% less energy than incandescent bulbs while lasting up to 25 times longer, according to the Energy Department.

NASA LISTENS FOR VOYAGER 2 SPACECRAFT AFTER WRONG COMMAND CUTS CONTACT


Heliopause
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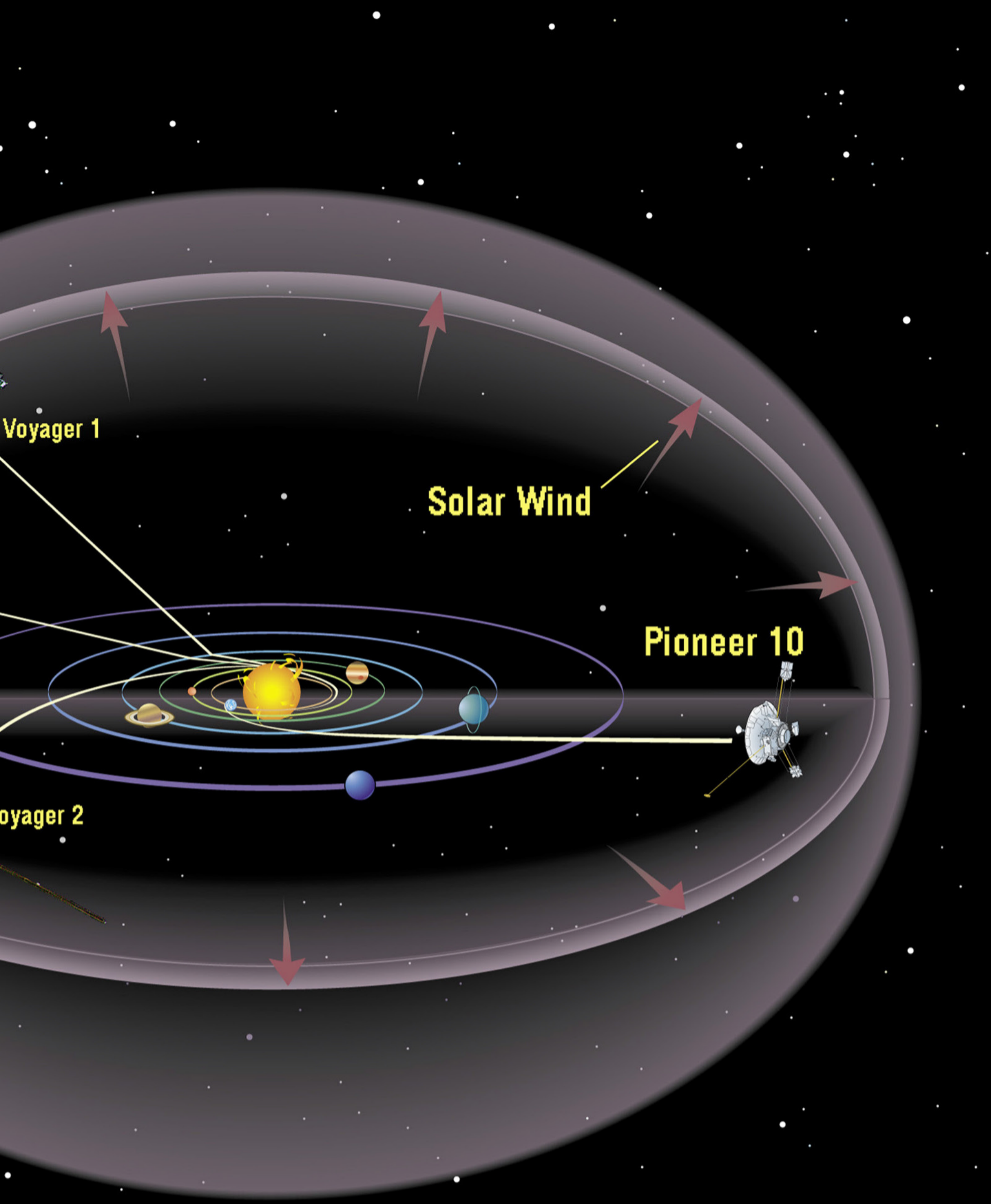
Pioneer 11
Termination
Shock
Bow Shock


Voyager 1
Solar Wind
Pioneer 10
oyager 2

NASA is listening for any peep from Voyager 2 after losing contact with the spacecraft billions of miles away.

Hurtling ever deeper into interstellar space, Voyager 2 has been out of touch ever since flight controllers accidentally sent a wrong command more than a week ago that tilted its antenna away from Earth. The spacecraft's antenna shifted a mere 2%, but it was enough to cut communications.

Although it's considered a long shot, NASA said that its huge dish antenna in Canberra, Australia, is on the lookout for any stray signals from Voyager 2, currently more than 12 billion miles (19 billion kilometers) distant. It takes more than 18 hours for a signal to reach Earth from so far away.

In the coming week, the Canberra antenna — part of NASA's Deep Space Network — also will bombard Voyager 2's vicinity with the correct command, in hopes it hits its mark, according to NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, which manages the Voyager missions.

Otherwise, NASA will have to wait until October for an automatic spacecraft reset that should restore communication, according to officials.

Voyager 2 was launched in 1977 to explore the outer planets, just a couple weeks ahead of its identical twin, Voyager 1.

Still in touch with Earth, Voyager 1 is now nearly 15 billion miles (24 billion kilometers) away, making it humanity's most distant spacecraft.

BABY'S FIRST HORROR? DISNEY'S 'HAUNTED MANSION' CONJURES UP A STORY ABOUT GRIEF

Haunted Mansion | Official Trailer

Disney's Haunted Mansion | New Trailer

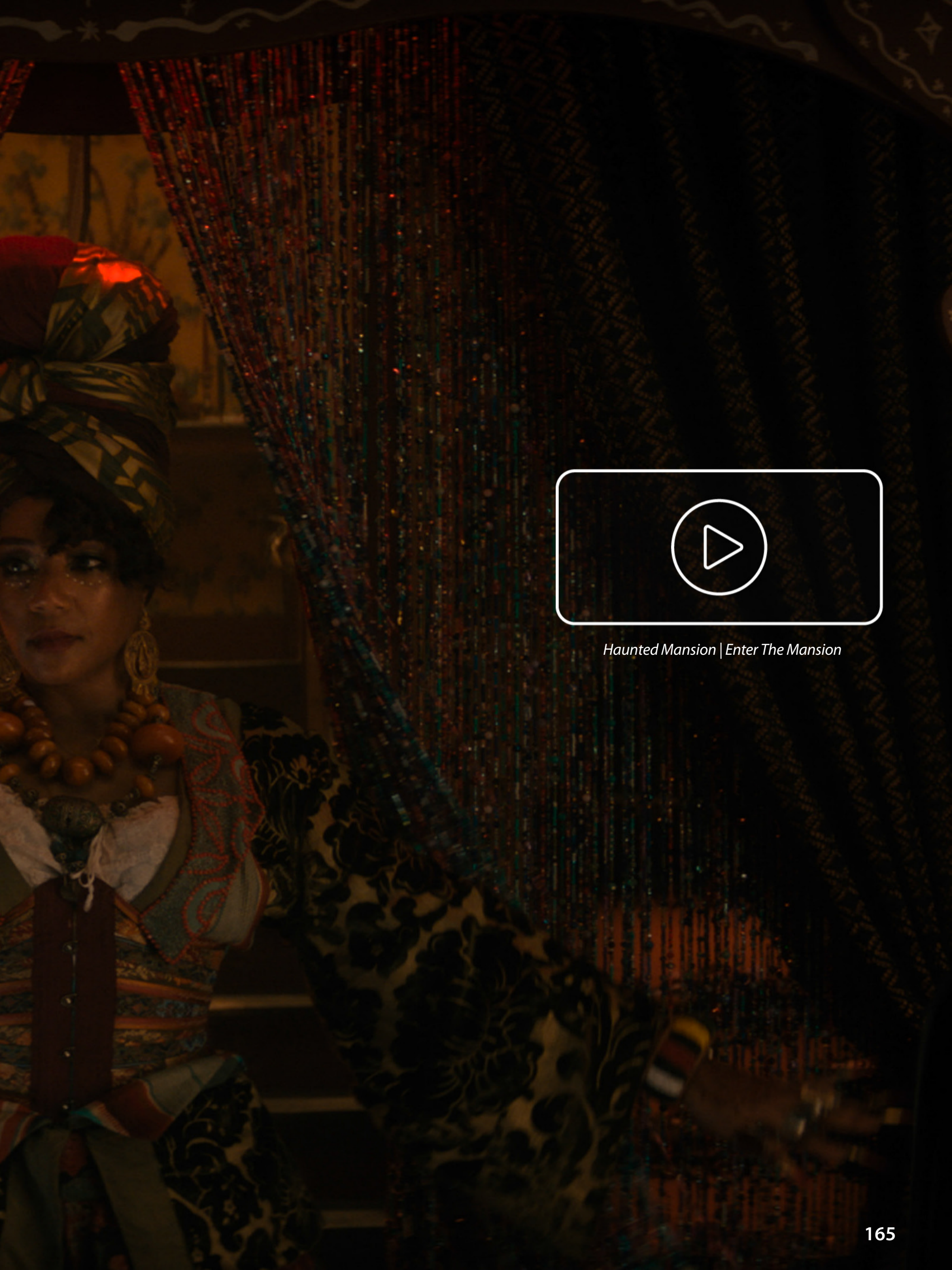
LaKeith Stanfield is disarmingly good as a grief-stricken astrophysicist barely scraping by in New Orleans, and increasingly jaded about the spirit-crazed tourists and mythologies of the city he calls home.

Unfortunately, though, this character and performance is housed in " Haunted Mansion," Disney's second attempt in 20 years to make a fun movie out of one of its beloved theme park rides. This version, directed by Justin Simien ("Dear White People") and written by Katie Dippold ("The Heat" and that iconic Babadook tweet) is worlds better than the Eddie Murphy disaster, but it's not really fun, spooky or engaging enough to make much of an impression beyond the moment.

It's too bad because the movie has some great writing, ideas and production design, as well as a cast including Rosario Dawson, Owen Wilson, Danny DeVito, Tiffany Haddish and Jamie Lee Curtis, who seem game to go big in that way that actors are only really allowed to in movies aimed at a younger audience. Wilson, as a priest who recruits Stanfield to come to the haunted house to investigate, spins every line into gold. It's perfect comedic relief, which Haddish, oddly, does not get enough of. Playing a psychic, she's a bit more subdued than usual, maybe playing against her character's elaborate turbans (costumer designer Jeffrey Kurland and his team went all out, in the best way, for this stylish lot).

The main problem is that "Haunted Mansion" strains to make coherent sense out of the disparate parts of the ride — the paintings, the seance table, the dance hall, Madame Leota — while also trying to tell a sincere story about grief and catharsis. Wasn't the song about grim

Haunted Mansion | Official Teaser Trailer



grinning ghosts coming out to socialize? This has more in common with the sadistic " Bird Box Barcelona " than I thought possible for a Disney movie, but at least someone had the good sense to cast an effortlessly menacing presence like Jared Leto as the bad ghost.

Still, this house has too many rooms and options for one movie — not to mention for a single mom (Dawson) looking to make a fresh start with her snappily dressed son by starting a bed and breakfast. I do wonder, hauntings aside, what her business plan was for this massive estate.

"Haunted Mansion" gets off to a needlessly confusing start, jumping around timelines and introducing its ensemble without much context, including Stanfield's Ben as a ghost skeptic and, separately, Dawson's Gabbie and her son Travis (Chase Dillon), as they move into the house in the middle of the night. This sequence is perfectly eerie and funny as Travis starts to explore the strange house, immediately noticing creepy oddities. Gabbie tries to reassure him until she catches her own glimpse of a wandering knight and they book it for the exit.

The haunted mansion catch is that once you enter the house, a ghost attaches itself to you — just like in the Doom Buggies in the ride — and haunts you until you come back. There is a lot of explanation but also somehow not enough as it's still a little unclear how they get from A to B. This movie gets tangled up in its own mythology and labyrinth of logic.

"Haunted Mansion" also attempts to employ modern horror flourishes that one might see in an R-rated Blumhouse movie but for the under-13 set. It's a strange trend in kids movies to try to do

the same thing you'd do in an adult movie but tamed down. This was recently a problem in the "Paw Patrol" movie, of all things, which seems to be partly homage to the later "Fast & Furious" films. Perhaps this is welcome in a horror context for kids itching to watch the more grown-up fare. But did we need to up the scare factor for kids in this way? Regular old ghost stories and a childlike imagination have been doing that heavy lifting for as long as there have been kids in the world. They don't need "Insidious"-lite terror.

And then there's this whole death thing, which in a movie about a haunted mansion makes sense, but "Haunted Mansion" perhaps takes it, and the kitchen sink computer graphics, a little too far.

The gold standard for these ride-based movies is still the first "Pirates of the Caribbean," which they have not been able to replicate. But it's interesting to have "Haunted Mansion" come on the heels of something like the "Barbie" movie — an auteur-driven, best-case scenario born out of a product. "Haunted Mansion" is by no means a terrible movie, or even an unpleasant watch, but it's just missing the magic that makes the trip to the theaters (or Disney World) worth it.

"Haunted Mansion," a Walt Disney Co. releaseD in theaters, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for "scary action, some thematic elements." Running time: 122 minutes. Two stars out of four.

MPA Definition of PG-13: Parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

EU INVESTIGATES MICROSOFT OVER CONCERNS BUNDLING TEAMS WITH OFFICE ELIMINATES COMPETITION

Image: Dimitri Karastelev

The European Union said that it has opened an antitrust investigation into Microsoft over concerns that bundling its Teams messaging and videoconferencing app with its Office productivity software gives it an unfair edge over competitors.

The European Commission, the 27-nation bloc's top competition enforcer, said it would carry out its in-depth investigation "as a matter of priority."

The investigation stems from a complaint filed in 2020 by Slack Technologies, which makes popular workplace messaging software.

Slack, owned by business software maker Salesforce, alleged that Microsoft was abusing its market dominance to eliminate competition — in violation of EU laws — by illegally combining Teams with its Office suite, which includes Word, Excel and Outlook.

rosoft

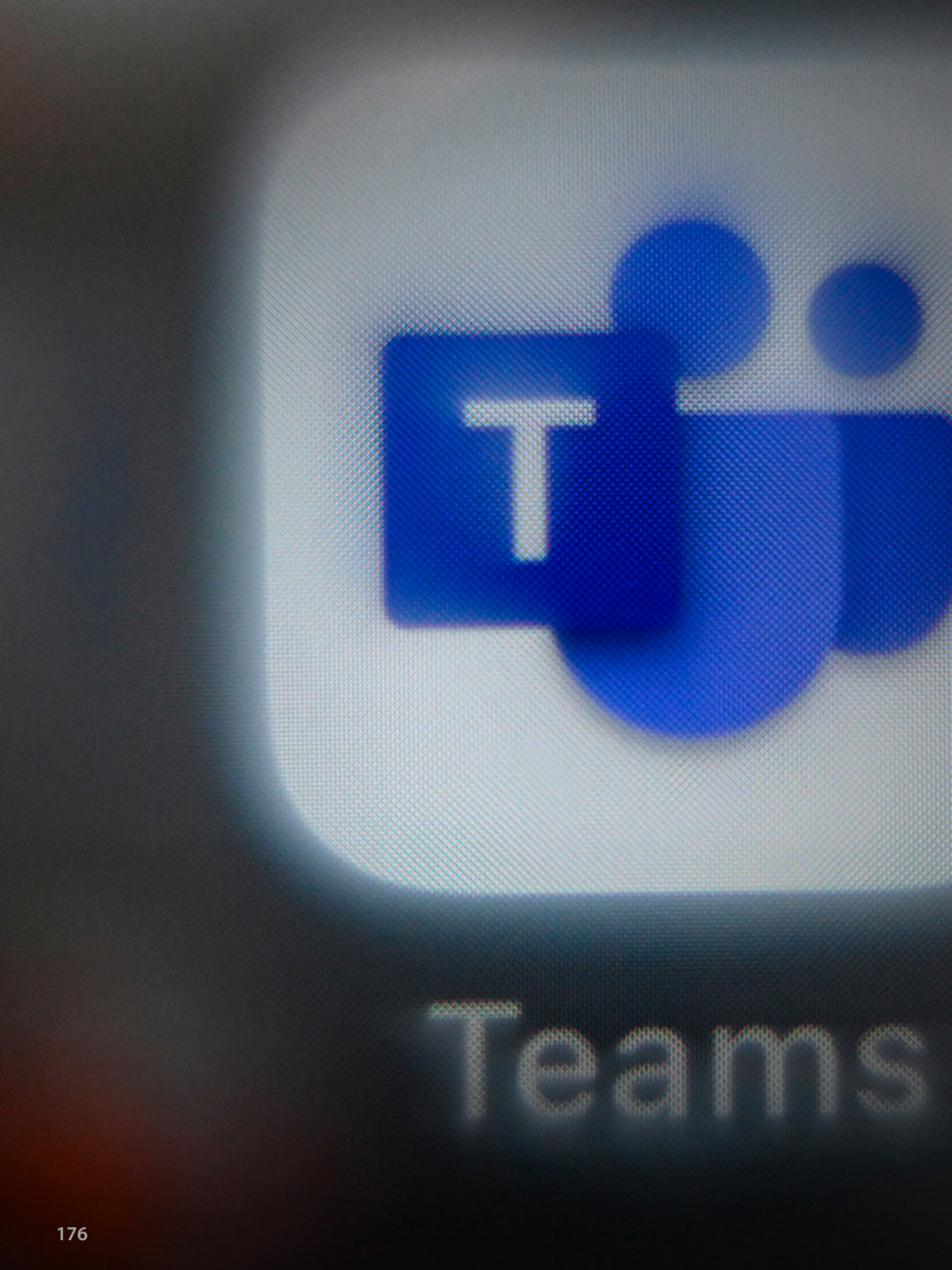
"Remote communication and collaboration tools like Teams have become indispensable for many businesses in Europe. We must therefore ensure that the markets for these products remain competitive," said Margrethe Vestager, the EU's antitrust commissioner.

"This is why we are investigating whether Microsoft's tying of its productivity suites with Teams may be in breach of EU competition rules," she added.

Microsoft said in a statement that it respected "the European Commission's work on this case." It added that it would "continue to cooperate with the commission and remain committed to finding solutions that will address its concerns."

Only last week, the German alfaview video conferencing company added its own complaint over Microsoft Teams, arguing that bundling gives the U.S. tech giant an unmatched competitive advantage "that is not justified by performance and that competitors like alfaview cannot match."

Image: Tadas Sar


Teams

The commission says opening the investigation in no way determines the outcome.

Europe has led the way in ratcheting up scrutiny of Big Tech companies over worries that they have become too dominant. When Brussels has looked into Microsoft's recent deals, however, the company has prevailed.

The EU approved Microsoft's plan to buy video game maker Activision Blizzard for $69 billion, after the company offered to automatically license popular Activision titles like "Call of Duty" for cloud gaming platforms.

Microsoft also has won EU clearance to buy video game company Zenimax and speech recognition company Nuance.

CHINA RESTRICTS CIVILIAN DRONE EXPORTS, CITING UKRAINE AND CONCERN ABOUT MILITARY USE

China imposed restrictions this week on exports of long-range civilian drones, citing Russia's war in Ukraine and concern that drones might be converted to military use.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping's government is friendly with Moscow but says it is neutral in the 17-month-old war. It has been stung by reports that both sides might be using Chinese-made drones for reconnaissance and possibly attacks.

Export controls take effect to prevent use of drones for "non-peaceful purposes," the Ministry of Commerce said in a statement. It said some drone exports still will be allowed.

China is a leading developer and exporter of drones. DJI Technology Co., one of the global industry's top competitors, announced in April 2022 it was pulling out of Russia and Ukraine to prevent its drones from being used in combat.

"The risk of some high specification and high-performance civilian unmanned aerial vehicles being converted to military use is constantly increasing," the Ministry of Commerce said.

Restrictions will apply to drones that can fly beyond the natural sight distance of operators or stay aloft more than 30 minutes, have attachments that can throw objects and weigh more than 7 kilograms (15½ pounds), according to the ministry.

"Since the crisis in Ukraine, some Chinese civilian drone companies have voluntarily suspended their operations in conflict areas," the Ministry of Commerce said. It accused the United States and Western media of spreading "false information" about Chinese drone exports.

FA3XAPL93T

The government defended its dealings with Russia as "normal economic and trade cooperation" after a U.S. intelligence report said Beijing possibly provided equipment used in Ukraine that might have military applications.

The report cited Russian customs data that showed Chinese state-owned military contractors supplied drones, navigation equipment, fighter jet parts and other goods.

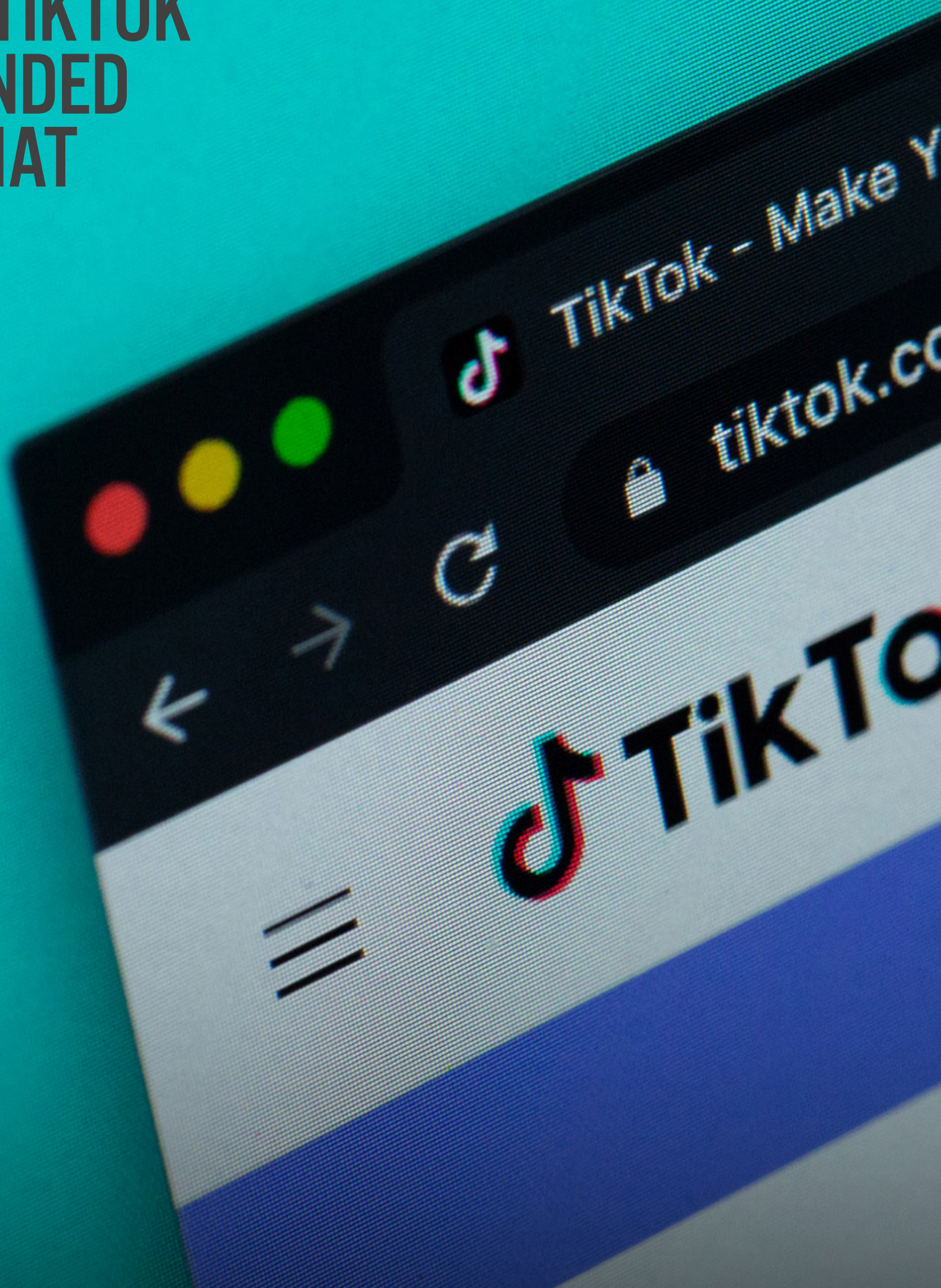
The Biden administration has warned Beijing of unspecified consequences if it supports the Kremlin's war effort. Last week's report didn't say whether any of the trade cited might trigger U.S. retaliation.

Xi and Russian President Vladimir Putin declared before the February 2022 invasion that their governments had a "no-limits" friendship. Beijing has blocked efforts to censure Moscow in the United Nations and has repeated Russian justifications for the attack.

China has "always opposed the use of civilian drones for military purposes," the Ministry of Commerce said. "The moderate expansion of drone control by China this time is an important measure to demonstrate the responsibility of a responsible major country."

The Ukrainian government appealed to DJI in March 2022 to stop selling drones it said the Russian ministry was using to target missile attacks. DJI rejected claims it leaked data on Ukraine's military positions to Russia.

AUSTRALIAN SENATE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS GOVERNMENT BAN ON TIKTOK BE EXTENDED TO WECHAT



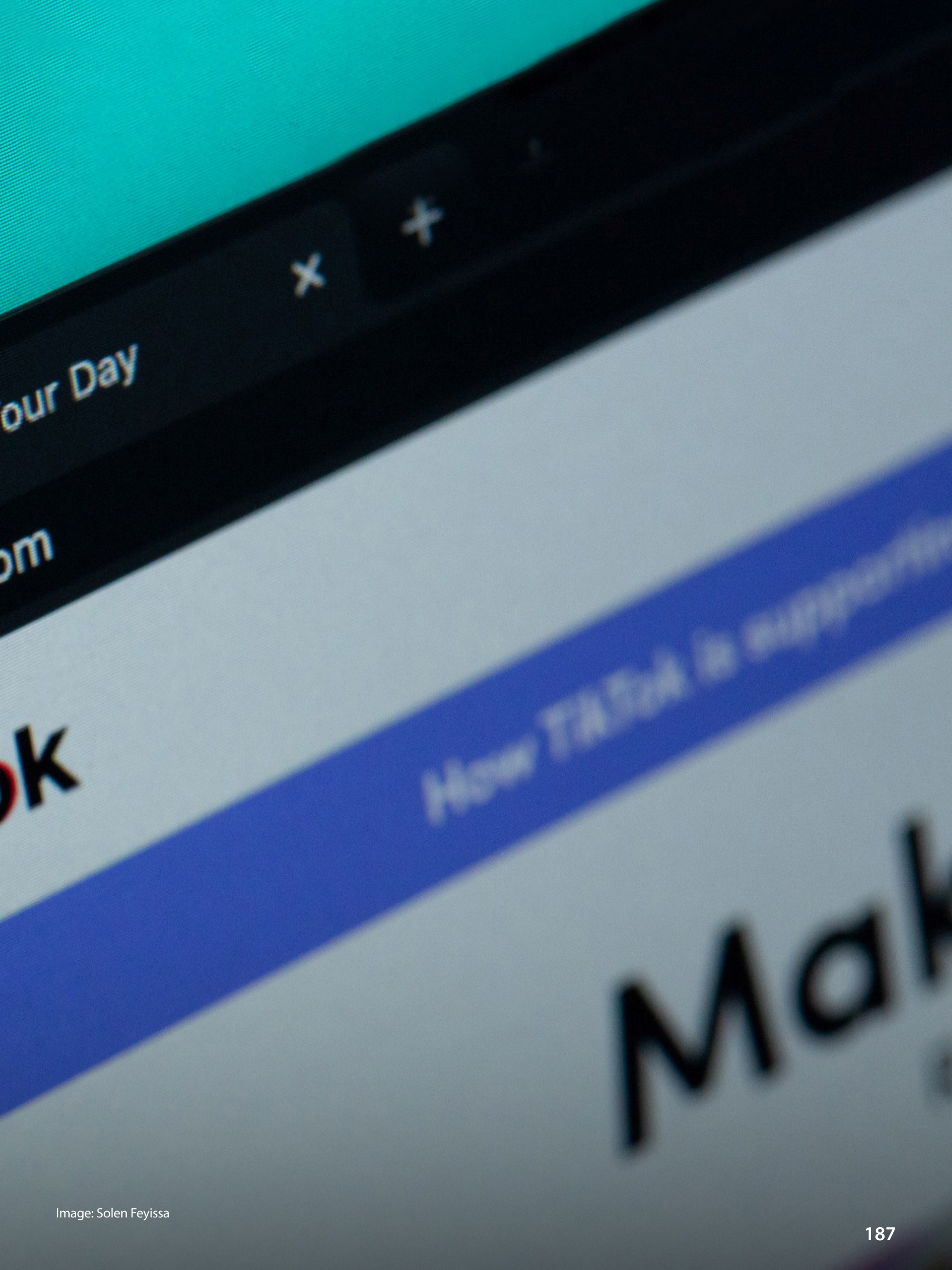


Image: Solen Feyissa

An Australian Senate committee has recommended a ban on the Chinese-owned video-sharing app TikTok from federal government devices be extended to China's most popular social media platform, WeChat.

The Committee on Foreign Interference through Social Media also recommended in a report late Tuesday that social media giants such as Facebook and Twitter should become more transparent or be fined.

Committee chair James Paterson said on Wednesday the report's recommendations would make Australia a more difficult target for the serious foreign interference risks that the nation faced.

"It tackles both the problems posed by authoritarian-headquartered social media platforms like TikTok and WeChat and Western-headquartered social media platforms being weaponized by the actions of authoritarian governments including Facebook, YouTube and Twitter," Paterson told reporters.

WeChat

The committee was established last year to examine uses of social media that undermine Australia's democracy and values, including the spread of misinformation and disinformation.

The committee found that China and other authoritarian regimes continue to pose an unacceptable risk to democracies through targeted online disinformation campaigns that leverage social media platforms to skew public debate and undermine trust in institutions.

The committee was particularly concerned by ByteDance-owned TikTok and Tencent-owned WeChat, which is popular with the Chinese diaspora in Australia, because they were run by Chinese authorities, the report said.

Australia in April became the last of the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing partners that include the United States, Canada, Britain and New Zealand to ban TikTok from government devices on the advice of security agencies.

The committee recommended the government consider extending that ban because WeChat posed similar data security and foreign interference risks.

Image: Darrian Traynor

11:33
TikTok

Tencent said it was reviewing the report in detail and was committed to committed to protecting user privacy.

"While we disagree with the depiction of WeChat in the report, we will continue to work with stakeholders in Australia to address any further concerns and ensure Australians can continue connecting with others through WeChat, " a Tencent statement said.

The committee also recommended that large social media platforms that operate in Australia meet a minimum set of transparency requirements that are enforceable with fines.

Meta, owner of Facebook and YouTube, and Twitter did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neil said her government would consider the report's recommendations and respond at a later date.

The government was already taking concrete action, including a review of security challenges associated with social media companies, taking into account information provided by Australian national security agencies, her office said in a statement.

CONNECTICUT MOVES TO BECOME THE LATEST STATE TO PLAN FOR ZERO-EMISSIONS CARS BY 2035

Connecticut is moving toward becoming the latest state with plans to halt the sale of new gas-powered cars by 2035.

Proposed state regulations would require auto dealerships in Connecticut to begin progressively selling more zero- or low-emission vehicles, including passenger cars, SUVs and light trucks, in 2027 and through 2035, until the new mandate would begin.

The regulations also require increasing percentages of electric medium and heavy-duty

ENVIRONMENT

electric vehicles, such as dump trucks, sold in the state by 2032, depending on the vehicle class. The concept was part of a wide-ranging law passed in 2022 that adopted California's clean air standards for certain trucks in an effort to reduce vehicle emissions.

California air regulators adopted regulations last summer to have all new cars, pickup trucks and SUVs be electric or hydrogen by 2035.

"I think we're doing it smart," Democratic Gov. Ned Lamont said at a news conference held this week at a Toyota dealership. He said he's spoken with the "auto guys" about the proposed 2035 deadline and asked if Connecticut was moving too fast.

"They say, 'keep your pedal to the metal'" and by that I mean "make sure we have a clear idea that Connecticut is not alone, it's going to be one of the states where it's all electric (in) 2023. That makes it easier for us to design and build (vehicles)," Lamont said.

Connecticut joins Rhode Island, Maryland, New Jersey and New Mexico in announcing plans to adopt the new standards. Massachusetts, New York and Vermont finalized adoption of the rules this year or in late 2022.

The Connecticut Department Energy and Environmental Protection Commissioner is accepting public comment on the proposed regulations until Aug. 23. DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes said she expects they will be ready for legislative approval by the end of year.

The regulations would only apply to vehicle manufacturers and would not affect used gas-powered cars, which would still be allowed to be driven in Connecticut.

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